

HISTORICAL and RATIONAL
INQUIRY
K INTO

The NECESSITY of an Uninterrupted
Succession of Diocesan Bishops,

(Superior by Divine Right to Presbyters)

As Necessary to the CONVEYANCE
of the MINISTERIAL OFFICE, and
the VALIDITY of ORDINANCES in
the Church.

Wherein is consider'd,

The Nature of the *Sanhedrim*, the *Synagogue*, and
the Rights of Societies, before the writing of the
Sacred Books, and since they were written.

of author Mr Platts.

*When you are secure of your Integrity before God, —
This will lead you not to be afraid of the Terrors of
Men, or the vain Words of Regular and Uninterrupted
Successions—Nullity, and Validity of God's Ordinances,
to the People, upon the account of Niceties and Trifles,
or any other the like Dreams.*

Bishop of Bangor's Preservative, Pag. 98.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White-Hart* in
Cheapside, near *Mercers-Chappel*. M DCC XIX.

Printed for J. Noe, at the W. & A. in
Oxford, and London, MDCCLX.

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An

An Historical and Rational En- quiry into the Necessity of an Uninterrupted Succession of Diocesan Bishops, &c.

THAT strange and unaccountable Contempt which hath of late been cast upon all Ministrations, except those perform'd under the Direction of a Diocesan Episcopacy, tho' never so fitted for the Edification of Mankind, hath led me to examine the Truth of that Hypothesis which hath been the Occasion of it; and that is, *The Necessity of a Succession of Diocesan Bishops, ordain'd by and ordaining from the Apostles in an uninterrupted Line, to the Being and Continuance of a Gospel-Ministry, a true Church, and valid Ordinances upon Earth, or a Covenant-Title to Heaven.*

This is the Notion I shall freely examine, which whether more *weak* in its Foundation, or *wicked* and *unnatural* in its Consequences, is hard to determine; and therefore to be sure so far from promoting the real Interest of Religion, or the Reputation of any Church, that if ever Men come to act according to the natural Consequences thereof, it will effectually *ruin* and *overthrow* every Church in the World.

For if this Proposition was but practically received, it would put a stop to all Endeavours to *propagate* the Ministry by the Ordination of others, and disappoint all Desires in others after that great Work: For if no one hath a Right to convey it, but he that derives by

B

such

such a *Line*, then no one should attempt to ordain, nor any seek to be *ordained*, but he that can find this unbroken Line. But this being a Matter *incapable of Proof*, nay *false in Fact* (as I hope to shew in the Sequel of this Discourse) must entirely end in the Ruin of the *Ministry*, and the perishing of the *Church*.

I doubt not but the Contempt which is pour'd upon the *Ministry of Reconciliation* in general, by *Deists* and *Libertines* (falsly called Freethinkers) under the odious Name of Priestcraft, is owing in some measure to other Mens boasting of this Succession, which placeth the Ministry upon so whimsical a Foundation. Nor would the Ordinances of religious Worship be treated with so much Disrespect, were not their Validity towards Men, and their Acceptance with God, placed upon such a bottom as was uncapable of certain Proof, and therefore might easily be rejected. In a sincere Pursuit after Truth, and a just Resentment of the Absurdities that follow from this *Hypothesis*, (which doth not only *unchristianize* every Protestant Church both foreign and domestick, except the Episcopal Churches, but indeed renders the Christianity and Ministry of every Church *precarious*, nay *invalid*) I have undertaken this Inquiry.

The Opinion it self is really *novel* in its present Form; and considering the Hands it came out of, and the Occasion it hath been principally urg'd upon, and the various Interests it hath served, may render it justly *suspected*. The Fathers *Ireneus* and *Tertullian*, and others, who liv'd within a Century, or a little more, of the Apostles themselves (and therefore could easily look back over the Pastors of the most eminent Christian Churches, and could tell their Ordainers, and describe the Line of their Succession) us'd to mention somewhat like this as a popular Argument against the Heresies of those Times; and did frequently appeal to the Apostolick Churches, as holding a Doctrine different from those Errors: but it is easy to observe, that the Argument, tho somewhat like it, was far from being the same, because the Succession they appealed to in the Apostolick Churches was not barely a Succession of Men, lineally deriving their Orders from the Apostles, but a Succession of Pastors holding the
Christian

Christian Doctrine, which they opposed as a very good Plea against the novel Opinions of the Hereticks of those Times : whereas the Hypothesis I am now examining, lays the whole stress upon a Succession of Men, deriving in an uninterrupted Line from the Apostles, and supposeth an *indelible* Character fix'd upon them, which neither *Heresy* in Doctrine, *Immorality* of Life, *Idolatry* in Worship, nor *Schism* in Practice can deface.

The Line of Succession now talked of, is far different from what it was in the Days of those Fathers who liv'd near the Apostles. The Papists are the Persons who gave occasion to the handling of the Argument in its present Form ; for that they might the better oppose the Progress of the Reformation, and bring the Protestant Churches into Disrepute, they asserted the Necessity of this uninterrupted Line of Pastors, ordained by Bishops from the Apostles. But the Reformed easily trampled upon this Argument, and despis'd its Threatnings : They argued from the Reason of the Thing, that the Imposition of a Bishop's Hand was so far from being necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministerial Office, that not the Imposition of any Man's Hand was necessary : * They argued from its parallel Cases, both in Politicks and Oeconomicks, that the Form of Celebration of a Contract, or Inauguration into a Right, was not essential to it : That Ordination resembles Coronation, which was not necessary to give a Title, but was the solemn Inauguration or Recognition of a Title obtain'd ; that as the Foundation of the Marriage-Contract lay in the mutual Consent of the Parties, and not in the Form of Celebration, (no one Form of which being look'd upon as necessary) so the Pastoral Office and Authority arose from the mutual Consent of Pastor and Church, to which no Declaration of this by Imposition of Hands could be called necessary. These and more are handled in the learned *Voetius* †. And besides this, they did (*ex abundanti*) turn the Argument upon the Pa-

* Vid. Claud. Defence Ref. Part 4.

† Voetius de desperata Causa Papatus.

pists themselves, and proved that Presbyters were the same as Bishops by the Appointment of Christ, and therefore the Successors of the Apostles, as well as the Bishops; and so the Protestants were as much in the Line as the Papists: Or if by any Steps the Protestants had broke the Line, they shewed the Papists had broke it as well as they.

As to the Reformed Church of *England*, she was long a Stranger to the Use of this Argument, nor did she attempt to establish the Repute of her Ministry upon it; but looked with a most friendly Aspect upon the Protestant Churches abroad, who had no Diocesan Bishops, suffered Persons ordained amongst them to enjoy Preferments, nay had nothing in her Constitution to hinder Persons ordained by Presbyters from officiating in her Communion, if they were conformable to her Articles and Ceremonies, till above a hundred Years after the beginning of the Reformation. 'Twas not to be expected the first Reformers should assert the Necessity of Ordination by a Diocesan Episcopacy, when by the Papers that are yet preserved, it appears plainly, that they who had the principal Hand in the first Reformation, and most strenuously defended it, looked upon Bishops and Presbyters as of the same Order *. The Church of *England* was wiser than to lay any stress upon this uninterrupted Succession, which they must derive to themselves thro the hands of the Church of *Rome* which they had left (and so broke the Chain) upon the account of the gross Errors in Doctrine impos'd upon their Consciences, vile Idolatry contain'd in her Worship, and Tyranny and Schism in her Constitution; and upon which account they charged her with being the mystical *Babylon*, and the Antichrist condemned in the Scripture; and were not therefore very fond of owning, that they derived the Essence of their Ministry thro such polluted Hands. They seemed to establish their Call upon different Foundations, which yet do in reality coincide. They urged the Power of the Christian Magistrate, as

* Vid. *Papers in Burnet's 1st Vol. Ref. and Stillingfleet's Irenicum*, cap. 8.

one who had the whole Care committed to him in Ecclesiastical as well as Civil Affairs, and laid one Ground of their Call upon him; and that Princes and Governors might make them by the Authority committed unto them of God, as the aforementioned Papers express it.

Another Ground on which they laid their Call, was the Election and Suffrage of Christian People, and these two Grounds do intirely coincide: For the Authority of the Christian Prince is no other, than the Right of the Society collected in one Person, and managed by him.

When the first Reformers were asked whether Priests or Bishops were first, they answered they were at one time, and both one Office in the beginning of Christ's Religion. They affirmed also that there was no Consecration of a Bishop or Priest required by Scripture, but Election, or appointing thereunto, was sufficient; and that as Princes made them by their Authority, so the People by their Election*. And particularly *Hooper*, the venerable Bishop of *Glocester*, for the maintaining of Unity and Agreement in Doctrine and Worship (who therefore to be sure had no Notion of these things different from the rest of the Reformers) gave forth certain Articles to be enquired after in his Visitation, and Heads of Discourse for the Direction of Preachers in his Diocess, who are by him instructed to teach the People, that the Church of God is the Congregation of the Faithful, wherein the Word of God is duly preached, and the Sacraments justly administred according to the Institution of Christ; and that the Church of God is not by God's Word to be taken for the Multitude or Company of Men, as Bishops, Priests, and such like; but that it is the Company of all Men hearing God's Word, and obeying the same (and this they were to teach;) lest any Man be seduc'd, believing himself to be bound unto an ordinary Succession of Bishops and Priests, whereas it should only be unto the Word of God, and the right Use of the Sacraments†.

* Vid. *Papers above*.

† Vid. *Strype's Life of Cranmer*.

And, in short, it was not to be expected that the Church of *England* should at first lay any stress upon this uninterrupted Line of Succession, as necessary to the Validity of Ordinances, when for the first fifty Years she allowed Laymen, and even Midwives, to baptize. And tho this was the Sense of the Church of *England* for almost one Century after the Reformation, yet, in time, Opinions took a new Turn, and under the Influence of Archbishop *Land* (in whose time there seemed a strong Inclination in many to coalesce, and come to an Agreement with the Church of *Rome*) more favourable Opinions grew of Popery, its Errors were palliated and excused; the just Censures of the first Reformers were disused, the Reformed Churches were more neglected, and as the Result of these politick Views, the Notions of uninterrupted Successions of Bishops were advanc'd, and the Persons that dislik'd them, and the Churches that wanted them, treated with Contempt. And in this Argument they have since flourished, it being found of singular Use in the opposing of the Dissenters, who seek not Ordination from Diocesan Bishops, but assemble themselves under the Direction of Pastors of particular Congregations. On these they have fallen with heavy Charges of the Nullity of their Proceedings.

It had been some time used before an Opportunity offered of turning it to another purpose, which at length occur'd upon this Occasion.

The glorious Revolution of Affairs in this Kingdom, which turn'd out the late King *James* for Male-Administration, and placed King *William* of immortal Memory upon the Throne, gave that Turn to the publick State, as very much shocked the political Notions of many.

The general Cry of the Ministers of the establish'd Church for several Years before, ran high for Passive-Obedience and Non-Resistance, the Independency of the Church, and the Indefeasibleness of Hereditary Right. Nay, Passive-Obedience and Non-Resistance were inserted into the very Terms of Conformity in 1662, and two thousand Ministers, who would neither betray the Liberties of the Church to an imposing Power, nor of the State to unbounded Tyranny, had been

been turned out for this amongst other things, because they would not affirm it *unlawful to resist the Sovereign, or those commissioned by him, upon any Pretence whatsoever*. This was indeed swallowed by them that conformed, and maintained as an Article of Conformity, till the Male-Administration of King James convinced them of their Error; and then the Apprehensions of the Danger both of Church and State, quickened them to invite the Prince of *Orange* to be their Deliverer, those of the established Church rose in most Counties to join him at his Landing, and at last placed him on the Throne, and dropt the Passive-Obedience Article out of the Terms of Conformity.

But it so fell out, that some of the established Church had so long taught the Unlawfulness of Resistance, till they believed it; and therefore looking on King James as illegally turned out, they refused to swear Allegiance to King William, and were accordingly by an Act of the State deprived of their Benefices: and because the publick Offices of the Church were suited to the late Alteration of the State, those that owned not King William in the State, were also dissatisfied to join in those Services where his Royal Authority was asserted, and God was praised for the Change; and upon this account there arose a Difference and a Separation in the established Church. For the Clergy, who refused to own the Government, set up separate Assemblies in which they officiated, and in their pleading for themselves, they revived the old Argument of an uninterrupted Succession, and turned it upon the established Church. They that adhered to King William were reproached as breaking the antient Canons, and falling in with Lay-Deprivations, deserting the true Episcopacy, which was illegally turned out, and joining with those who were unjustly put into their Chairs, and being *secundi* were *nulli* (according to the antient ways of Expression.) They accused them hereby of breaking the Line of Succession, as guilty of Schism, and shutting themselves out of God's Covenant-Mercy; and all the Cant and Resentment which the warmest Churchmen used to apply to the Dissenters, were now turned upon the established

blished Church by the Nonjurors, who accuse her of *Heresy, Schism, and immoral Prayers.*

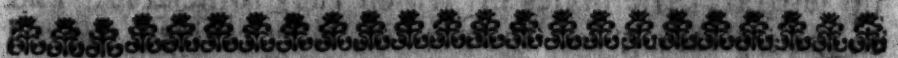
But surely one may justly suspect an Argument, which suits so many differing Interests and Parties : I shall therefore endeavour to examine it thorowly, that the Insufficiency of it may appear to the Purposes it is intended to serve ; and shall endeavour to shew, that a *Succession of Diocesan Bishops* (of an Order superior to Presbyters by Divine Right) *ordained by, and ordaining from the Apostles in an uninterrupted Line, is not necessary to the Being and Continuance of the Ministerial Office, a true Church, and valid Ordinances in the World.* And in order to clear this Matter, I shall proceed by several Degrees of Evidence in the Course of my Argument. And,

First, I shall shew that such a Succession cannot be necessary to the Being and Continuance of the Ministry, because it cannot be proved it has been maintained.

Secondly, That it is highly probable it hath not been observed.

Thirdly, That it is certain it hath been broken. And,

Fourthly, That if it could be proved it had been kept up, yet it is not necessary. The clearing these several Arguments will, I presume, be useful in shewing the Absurdity of the Hypothesis I am endeavouring to confute.



C H A P. I.

1. **I** Think we may reasonably conclude, that such a Succession of Bishops is not necessary to the Being of the Church and Ministry, because Providence hath not preserved to us the Means of proving, that such a regular Succession hath been maintained and kept up. Now it seems a reasonable Expectation, that God, who hath assured us that he will have a Church in the World to the Consummation of all Things, should also preserve to us the Means of coming to the Knowledge of what is essential to it. But Providence

ence not having preserved to us the Means of coming
 to the Knowledge of this Succession, we may safely
 pronounce that this Succession is not essential and neces-
 sary. And that Providence hath not preserved to us
 the Means of proving this Succession, is plain to eve-
 ry one that hath, or will make the Attempt to trace it
 from the present Persons in the Ministry to the Foun-
 tain of the Succession. The Troubles and Persecu-
 tions which beset the Christian Church in its first
 planting, prevented the collecting of such Records as
 were necessary to the clearing of this *Succession* with
 any *Historical Certainty*, or else those Troubles pre-
 vented them from reaching us. But now is it not ra-
 tional to suppose, that if it had been necessary, the
 means of knowing it would have been secur'd? Pro-
 vidence hath preserv'd other things that are confess'd
 to be essential to the Christian Church, (such as the
 true Faith and Sacraments;) and therefore we may
 suppose, that the Means of proving this not being
 known, it is not to be looked upon as necessary. The
 Doctrines of Faith, and the Administration of the Sa-
 craments, which claim a necessary Relation to the
 Christian Church, are preserved to us inviolably by
 the Preaching of the Apostles, and the Writings of
 the sacred Scriptures. These have indeed passed thro'
 a Multitude of Hands since their first Writing; they
 have borne the Rage of open Enemies, and passed thro'
 the Hands of pretended Friends that have proved trea-
 cherous; They have felt the Attempts of perverse He-
 reticks, and gone thro the Hands of ignorant Tran-
 scribers, and yet have they not suffered in their Truth
 and Morality. A peculiar Providence hath defended
 them in all Places, and all Times; and whatever In-
 structions they contain in them necessary to the Chris-
 tian Church, are plain to be known. But this can-
 not be said of the uninterrupted Succession of Bishops
 from the Apostles Time. How many Churches do
 we read of, both in Sacred and Ecclesiastical History,
 of whom we have no manner of Account who the
 first Planters were? Or if we are told how they were
 planted; yet it doth not appear how they were mana-
 ged, or the Succession kept up among them. But all
 this ought to be known, if this be necessary to the Be-
 ing

ing and Continuance of the Church, as fully as any other necessary Point. It doth not remove this Difficulty to say, we must fall in with those Churches that seem most likely to have maintained the Succession, till we can disprove them: For if this Succession be necessary, it will follow that we must certainly prove it doth belong to some Christian Church, before we can be under an Obligation to join with any. But how insuperable a Task do we set every Christian about, whether learned or unlearned? How can a Minister tell, that the Predecessors of the Bishop who ordained him, were themselves canonically ordained up to the Apostles? How much less shall the private Christian know this concerning the Minister that he joins with? And yet upon this Hypothesis, the Minister must either know this, or else he must not proceed in his Ministrations, but look on all his former Acts as unjust Lay-Usurpations; and the private Christian must know this, or else he is under no Obligation to join with the Ministry he now attends. Now all this being plainly impossible to be known, thro a Deficiency of such Records as should clear it, it is not to be supposed necessary that there should be such a Succession. And as this is plain and obvious in the gross, concerning Multitudes of Christian Churches (of which as we neither know the Founders and Planters, so we neither know how the Succession was propagated or maintained amongst them;) so we may judge of the Uncertainty of their Line of Succession, by what occurs concerning the State of Christianity in our own Country, and the Uncertainty we are in about this Succession.

It is generally agreed amongst our own Ecclesiastical Historians, that Christianity was received in our own Kingdom during the first Century, or near it: And yet, as Mr. *Wharton* * confesseth, he was not able to give an Account of those Persons who governed the Christian Church for near five hundred Years after its first planting; so consequently we can't tell whether the Succession was kept up among them or no. Now

* *In Anglia Sacra, a Work designed to give us the History of the Succession of our English Prelates.*

therefore

Therefore how unreasonable a Thing must it be to place the Being of the Church, and the Validity of Administrations, upon such a Succession as cannot be proved, and which can only serve to perplex Ministers and Christians about the *Safety* of their States, and their *Acceptance* with God! For, in short, the Notion seems to be raised with this very View by the politick Church of *Rome*, that by dissertling the Foundations of other Churches, and introducing Scepticism and Infidelity, she might lead those whom she had thus reduced into a Distress, to take Sanctuary in her pretended Infallibility.

CHAP. II.

BUT I proceed to a *second* thing, viz. to shew that it is highly probable, that such a Succession of Bishops as is pretended necessary, hath not been kept up in the Christian Church. And that I may bring the Matter to our selves, I shall confine my self to the Consideration of the State of Christianity in *Great Britain*, by which it will appear that it is probable no such Succession of Diocesan Bishops was kept up.

1. I shall here begin with the Account of Christianity among the antient *Britons*.
2. Give the Account of it in *North-Britain*.
3. The Restoration of Christianity in *South-Britain* after the *Saxons* were come hither.

SECT. I.

1st, I BEGIN with the Account of Christianity among the antient *Britons*. And here it is universally acknowledged, that we are at a loss concerning the Quality, and the Character of the Person or Persons who brought it hither. It is indeed conjectured the Apostle *Paul* might do it, having time for such a Voyage between his first and second Imprisonment; but it is no more than a Conjecture. The Accounts we have of the State of Christianity here are very short and few, and

and that renders them confused and uncertain. *Gildas*, who is our most antient Historian, tells us, " That
 " the Monuments of our Country and Writings, if
 " there were any, are either perished by the Rage of
 " Enemies, or transported afar off by our banished
 " Countrymen." We are told of a certain King, called
Lucius, under whom *Britain* embraced Christianity,
 and who turned the Archflamins and Flamins of the
 Heathens into Archbishops and Bishops. But this Ac-
 count is rejected by the learned *Scillingfleet* as fabu-
 lous, and inconsistent with the true State of *Britain*,
 then under the *Romans*, and therefore unlikely to have
 any such King as this to rule over *Britain*, as this Sto-
 ry represents him: However, if we think it impro-
 bable such a Story should arise from nothing, we may
 allow him to be some inconsiderable Prince either out
 of the *Roman* Pale, or else allowed to rule under
 them, but yet never capable of doing the great Things
 ascribed to him.

But to return to *Gildas*, who wrote about 564. If
 we consult the Passages taken out of him by the lear-
 ned Dr. *Calamy* †, we shall find such Evidence, as will
 render it highly probable that the *British* Church did
 not maintain this uninterrupted Succession of Bishops
 from the Beginning of Christianity. For when he
 mentions the Ecclesiastical State of the *Britons*, he tells
 us of Priests, Clerks, and Doctors, (which were the
 antient usual Names of the Presbyters of the Christian
 Church) but mentions nothing of the Bishops as an
 higher Order, till he came to speak of later Times,
 wherein Things had taken another Turn. And speak-
 ing of the Persecution under *Maximian*, he tells us,
The chosen Priests of the Flock of our Lord, and the in-
nocent Sheep were murder'd, but not any thing of the
 Sufferings of the Bishops. And if it be pretended that
 both Bishops and Presbyters were comprehended un-
 der this one Name, it will not prove the Hypothesis,
 only afford a very strong Presumption that their Of-
 fice was the same, while their Names and Characters
 were thus common. And when he is speaking of the

† Dr. *Calamy's Discourse*, intitled, *God's Concern for his*
Glory in the British Isle.

Corruption of the *Britons*, he saith, *The Flock of God, and its Pastors were as corrupt as the rest.* And in another Place, when he mentions Bishops, and Priests, or Clerks, he calls them *our Order*, thereby signifying they were both one Order. And in one Place, speaking of some Difference of Degree, he said, it was assumed, *Tyrannico More*, in a tyrannous manner. It is indeed said that there were three Bishops present at the Council of *Arles* from *Britain*, Anno 314. but several Things are said which render this Matter very improbable; That there are very great Variations in the Subscriptions between the several Copies that preserve them to us; some Copies mentioning three out of *Britain*, some two Bishops, another only one: and after all, they might be some neighbouring Bishops from *Gaul*, and the Transcriber might ignorantly insert *Britain*. But that which seems to render it highly probable that there were no *British* Bishops there (if not certain that there were none) is, that it was decreed in the Council of *Arles*, that *Easter* should be observed upon the same Sunday. Now it is certain that the *Britons* did not so observe it, and therefore it is most likely they were not there. It is also further said, that *British* Bishops were at the Council of *Nice* 325. but this can scarce be called a Conjecture, 'tis rather a groundless Assertion.

For there is no mention of *British* Bishops in the Subscription, nor do any of the Historians, who mention the particular Countries from which Bishops came, mention any as coming from *Britain*. And besides, the Canon directing the Observation of *Easter*, was against their Practice; and yet the Summons having been made general to all Christian Countries under the Empire, and there not appearing any there from *Britain*, one would rather conjecture they had no Bishops to appear.

But it is further objected, that this Succession of Bishops appears plain from the Reason of the Thing; because, say they, there is no Church which derived from the Apostles; but we have as good an Account that there were Bishops, as that there were Christians. But this Objection is fully answered by the learned *Stillingfleet* in his *Irenicum*, who shews both from the Nature

Nature of the Thing, and some remarkable Testimonies, that the Apostles did not observe one constant Order in the settling of Churches. He argues, from the different State of the Churches, the same Form was not needful, a small Number of Believers not requiring the same Number of Governors, nor Form of Government, as a larger; and then confirms the Matter by several Quotations from Antiquity: From St. *Jerom* he observes, that at *Alexandria*, from the time of St. *Mark* (who is said to be the first Bishop of *Alexandria*) to that of *Heraclas* and *Dionysius*, that the Presbyters chose one from among themselves, and placed him in an higher Degree, and named him their Bishop; just as the Army chuseth the Emperor, or the Deacons chuse one whom they know industrious, and call him their Archdeacon: so that the Superiority that the Bishops had was from the Consent of Presbyters. This is also confirmed by *Eutychius*, the Patriarch of *Alexandria*, who affirms also, that the twelve Presbyters, constituted by St. *Mark* upon the Vacancy of the See, did chuse out of their Number one to be Head over the rest, and the other eleven laid their Hands on him, and blessed him, and made him Patriarch.

He further * proves from *Epiphanius*, that the Apostles did not observe one certain Order: For the Apostle *Paul*, saith *Epiphanius* (*Cont. Aerium Hares.* 75. p. 903. *Ed. Petav.*) when he only mentions Bishops and Deacons in the Epistle to *Timothy*, and passeth over Presbyters, writ according to the present State of Things; for the Apostles could not settle all Things at first, Where Bishops were not yet appointed, the Apostle writes to Bishops and Deacons (by Bishops meaning the same with Presbyters, as the learned *Scillingfleet* observes, otherwise he would contradict himself) for there was a Necessity of Presbyters and Deacons; for by these two Orders all Ecclesiastical Offices might be performed: for where there was not found any one worthy to be a Bishop, the Place remained without one; but where Necessity required, and some were found fit, there some were ordained Bishops. But where for want of a convenient Number there could be no Presbyters found out to be or-

clained, there they were contented with Bishops and Deacons; for without their Ministry, the Bishop could not be. So that according to the Sense of Epiphanius, the Apostles followed these several Methods, sometimes fixing Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, where there were a Number found meet, sometimes only Presbyters and Deacons, and sometimes Bishops and Deacons: all which may serve sufficiently to answer this Objection, and shew the Apostles did not observe one certain Form and Method in the Christian Churches which they planted.

But that which seems to render it highly probable, that the first British Christians had not preserved a Regular and Canonical Succession of Bishops, is a Passage of † Bede's History, which is this, That Ceadda, (the Brother of the famous Cedde mentioned afterwards) being designed Bishop of York, was forced to travel from Canterbury, where he expected Orders (that Bishop being just dead) as far as Winchester, whose Bishop was called Wini; and, as Bede saith, there was not any other canonically ordained Bishop in all Britain, except this Wini: *Non enim erat tunc ullus excepto Wini in tota Britannia Canonice Ordinatus Episcopus.*

The Notion of Canonical Ordination is plain; for in the Language of this Age it signified the Ordination of such as had it from Bishops: for this the Romish Church insisted on, and shortly after reordained such as had it not, as appears in the Case of the Bojaris, and by their Practice towards the Scots, as we shall shew afterwards. Wini is therefore the only Canonical Bishop in Britain, tho there were several of those that the Scots had ordained. And tho mention is made in this Chapter of this Wini taking two British Bishops (for so they are called) who kept Easter as he did; so that it is plain that the Britons, who lived in the West, kept up such as were called Bishops, two of whom Wini joined with himself in the Ordination: yet it seems from Bede they were not canonical, i. e. such as pretended to derive their Ordinations from the Apostles by other Bishops: For Wini was then the only Canonical Bishop according to Bede. And this was the

Notion of Canonical Ordination, for the Canons had before this forbid the Presbyters to ordain, and confined it to Bishops.

So that according to the same Method, sometimes Apollonius followed these several Methods, sometimes fixing Bishops, sometimes Presbyters, where there were a Number found meet, sometimes only Presbyters.

SECTION II.

AND having thus given an Account of the State of Christianity in the South Part of Britain, I proceed, Secondly, to consider the State of it in the North Part, and examine whether it be not highly probable that an uninterrupted Succession of Bishops, superior to Presbyters, was never kept up. And this Account I shall give from † one, who being himself Archbishop, cannot be suspected of Partiality in favour of Presbytery: And his History being wrote by Order of King James, (one may well imagine Care was taken to furnish himself with such Records, as might give him the best Information; and he * tells us, that Christianity was known among the Scots very early, and applies to them that Saying of Tertullian (*Britannorum Loca Romanis inaccessa, Christo vero subdita*) that the Places of Britain, inaccessible to the Romans, were subjected to Christ. He conjectures indeed that they embraced Christianity by the preaching of some of the Followers of John, not from any Missionaries from Rome, because of their Difference from the Church of Rome in many Instances, particularly in celebrating Easter at a different Time from them. † He observes the Scottish Nation embraced Religion more fully under King Donald about 203. but its most considerable Settlement was under the Reign of Cratlinth (277.) who gave the Isle of Man to such Christians as came thither from the Persecution of Dioclesian: And in this Isle sat Amphibalus, the first Person spoken of as a Bishop. By which it appears, that Christianity was in Scotland near two hundred Years before there was a Bishop that sat there. He also further observes †, that the first Preachers were Culdees or Presbyters, who, for their better Government, were wont to chuse one out of them-

† Spotswood.

* Pag. 2.

‡ Pag. 4.

elves to be their Chief and Principal, without whose Knowledge and Consent nothing was done in any Matter of Importance ; and the Person so elected was called *Scotorum Episcopus*, or a *Scottish Bishop*. And this, he tells us, was the only Title they had amongst them till 1057. when *Malcolm III.* divided *Scotland* into *Diocesses*. He tells us, pag. 5. that one *Regulus* a *Greek*, coming for *Scotland* with *Domianus* a Priest, and others, sixteen in number, being tossed with a Tempest, landed in *Otholinia*, now *St. Andrews*, founded a Church there, and became the *second Bishop in Scotland* mentioned in History ; this he tells us was about 470. Pag. 6, 7. He gives us an Account of *St. Ninian*, born indeed in *Britain*, but bred up in *France*, under his Great Uncle *St. Martin Bishop of Tours* ; who coming into *Scotland*, founded the Church of *Galloway*, and was also called a Bishop, tho we are not told who ordained him. This is the third Person so called, who came about 450. Pag. 7. About this time, he saith, came *Palladius*, to purge the Church of Pelagianism, and he ordained two Bishops, *Servanus* of *Orkney*, and *Tervanus* among the *Northern Picts*.

Columba is also mentioned as another Bishop about the Year 566 ; but the Writer of his Life, quoted by *Chamberlain*, in his Account of the *New State of Great Britain*, saith he was a Priest, and so saith *Bede* expressly : He settled in the Isle of *Jona*, called after him *J. Columb. Kil.* By all which it appears, that Christianity was known in *Scotland* near two hundred Years before History mentions a Bishop among them, and that there were not above five during the first four or five hundred Years that Christianity was among them ; that if there were any other, they were made by the Choice of the *Culdees* or *Presbyters*.

So that it is highly probable, that a Succession of Bishops superiour to Presbyters, was never kept up in an uninterrupted Line for the first five hundred Years in *Scotland*, after the Plantation of Christianity. But against this Account it is objected, that the Conversion of the *Scots* under *Donald* is fabulous, because the *Scots* were not then come out of *Ireland* where they first settled.

To this I answer, That tho it may be fabulous to assign the *Scots* an earlier Entrance into *Scotland* than they really had; yet it will not follow but that there might be such an early Conversion of *North-Britain*, whoever were the Inhabitants; and this may in common speaking be apply'd to the *Scots*, who afterwards incorporated with the antient Inhabitants, just as the several Transactions of our own Country are attributed in general to *Britons* and *Englishmen*, tho we are a Mixture of *Saxons*, *Danes*, and *Normans* with the antient *Britons*.

But it is further objected, that the Story of the *Culdees* is also fabulous, as not being confirmed by any Historian near the Times in which they were said to be; and it is pretended to be a Story trump't up by later Writers, to give countenance to the Innovation of the Presbytery, and the Deposition of Episcopacy.

To this I answer, That some Credit is to be given (one would think) to so many Writers that concur in one Testimony in Things of their own Nation, even tho there do not now remain Authors cotemporary with those Facts they speak of; for they do not mention the Thing as a peculiar Discovery of their own, but as an antient Tradition assented to by all, or mentioned by such former Historians as they then consulted, tho those antient Writers do not now remain. And how uncertain must the Histories of our own Nation be, if we are to receive nothing as true in the five first Centuries, unless we shew the Writings of those Historians that were cotemporary with those Facts?

The *Scottish* Historians are very consentaneous upon these Heads. *Hector* * *Boethius* tells us, that before *Palladius*, the chief Priests (or *Bishops*, as he there means) were made by the Suffrage of the People from amongst the *Monks* and *Culdees*. *John Major* † says, That in former Times the *Scots* were instructed in the Faith by Priests without Bishops. And *Fordon* ‡ tells us, That the *Scots* had Doctors and Ministers of the

* Hist. Scot. lib. 7. Sol. 128.

† De Gest. Scot. lib. 2. cap. 2.

‡ Chron. lib. 3. cap. 8.

Sacrament, that were *only Presbyters* or Monks, following herein the Custom of the * *Primitive Church*. So many Authors concurring together, deserve some Credit in an Affair of their own Country, even tho it should be confessed that they mistake in calling the Inhabitants by the same Name, as they were called in their own Time.

But further it is to be observed, that *North-Britain* was no Stranger to the Government of the Church by Presbyters, or such Bishops as were ordained by them, as appears by these Considerations, confirmed by Authors that lived sufficiently near those Times to be brought in as Evidences, tho we should leave the former Story upon the Credit of the Author who vouched it.

For since the learned Bishop *Stillingsfleet* and others have said so much upon the first Part of the *Scottish History*, as to render it doubtful whether the present Inhabitants came in so early; and consequently have rendered it uncertain what the Form of their Church-Government was, from the Uncertainty of their Histories; we are obliged for the clearing up of this Point, so far as we are capable, to descend to lower Times. And here let us consider the Case of *Palladius*, concerning whom *Bede* tells us†, that about the Year 430, he was sent by Pope *Celestine I.* Bishop to the Scots who believed in Christ. The Disputes of the Learned have rendered it somewhat uncertain, whether these Scots were the Inhabitants of *North-Britain* or of *Ireland*; *Bede* oft calling the Inhabitants of *Ireland* by that Name, and yet leaving it somewhat uncertain whether they had made their Settlement in *North-Britain* before this time.

If these Scots were the Inhabitants of *Ireland* at that time, here is another Instance of Christianity settled in a Country without a Succession of Bishops, since *Palladius* was the first, and yet Christianity had been settled among them before. But if these Scots had at that time made their Settlement in *North-Britain*, then it is a Proof that the Church of *Scotland* was no

* Vid. Owen's *Plea*, Script. Ord.

† Lib. 1. cap. 13.

Stranger to a Government by Pastors without Bishops, which is what we produced it for, and is a great Confirmation of the Testimony produced from *Hector Boethius* *, that before *Palladius* the chief Priests or Bishops were made by the Suffrage of the People from amongst the *Monks and Culdees*; and this it proves wherever the *Scots* were at that time.

But let us proceed forward: *North-Britain* at last becomes peopled with two Sorts of Persons, the *Picts* from *Scandinavia* and about the *Baltick*, who settled on the North side Mount *Grampius*, and after that the *Scots* from *Ireland*, who conquered or incorporated with them; the particular Seasons of which are not easy to determine. However, it is certain the *Picts* were come before 430, as appears by the † Complaint of the *Britons* to the *Romans*: And the *Scots* (as the learned *Stillingfleet* concludes) before 460, who settled on the South-side of Mount *Grampius*. The coming of these Colonies from two several Nations, occasions in History a twofold Account of the Conversion of *North-Britain*. 1. *St. Ninian*, who, as *Bede* tells us, was born in *Britain*, was instructed in the Faith, and the Mysteries of Truth at *Rome*, and became a zealous Preacher, and the Instrument of converting the *Scots*, who settled on the South-side of Mount *Grampius*, *Anno Dom.* 450. and built a Church among them, which he called *St. Martins*, in honour of his Uncle Bishop of *Tours*; and was a Bishop, as || *Bede* saith, tho by whom ordained we are not certain; and therefore cannot tell how capable he was to keep up the Episcopal Succession in the present Sense of the Word: For we have seen already, that the keeping up the Name was no Evidence that they had kept up the same Episcopacy that is now pretended to.

But leaving this Matter as it was, let us consider the Conversion of the *Picts*, who settled on the North-side Mount *Grampius*, for the effecting of which Providence raised up *Columba* about the Year 560, as *Bede* informs us **. He was a *Presbyter* and Abbot, who

* Lib. 7. Sol. 128.

† Vid. *Bede*, lib. 3. cap. 13.

|| Lib. 3. cap. 4.

** Ibid.

came out of *Ireland* into the North Parts of *Scotland*, at the time that *Bridius* the Son of *Milocha* reigned there; and by his and his Companion's great Endeavours, he converted that Part of the Country, and the King of the *Picts* gave him the Island of *Huy*, where he built a Monastery, and where he was buried about 630, aged 77. He had before his Coming to the *North Picts* in *Britain*, founded a noble Monastery in *Ireland*, in a Place called *Dearmach*, or *Field of Oak*. And from this Monastery, and that of *Huy*, many other Monasteries were raised by his Disciples both in *England* and *Ineland*, of all which *Huy* had the Pre-eminence. And the Monastery in this Island had this Custom, as *Bede* tells us, to have an Abbot Presbyter for its Governor, to whose Jurisdiction the whole Island, and the Bishops themselves were subject, according to the Example of the first Founder, who was not a Bishop, but a Monk and Presbyter*, tho he observes this was unusual. Now what can be more plain than that Christianity was propagated among the *North Picts* by the Labours and Endeavours of this Presbyter and his Seniors, and the Missionaries he sent forth? And consequently could neither pretend to have this uninterrupted Succession of Bishops superiour to Presbyters, nor could pretend to convey it to those that descended from them; because their Converter was but a Presbyter, and could not, according to the Hypothesis we are now confuting, propagate Episcopacy. And that which ought to be observed, is, that this Story gives a further Light to the Passages we quoted from the *Scotish* Historians, concerning their being governed in the early Times of Christianity by Monks and Caldees without Bishops. For if we only suppose what was really true in fact, that the *Scots*, who gave afterwards their Name to *North-Britain*, came out of *Ireland*, and that those Accounts which *Hector Boethius*, *John Major*, and *Fordon* give us, containing the State of Christianity in *Scotland*, were to be attributed to

* Habere autem solet ipsa Insula Rectorem semper Abbatem Presbyterum, cujus Juri, & omnis Provincia, & ipsi Episcopi Ordine inusitato debeant esse subjecti, juxta Exemplum primi Doctoris, qui non Episcopus sed Presbyter & Monachus extitit.

their

their Predecessors in *Ireland*, where they were before they came for *North Britain*; this Story of the Practice of *Columba*, renders it credible, that *Presbyters* without *superiour Bishops* had the Government of the Church in *Ireland*: For it is not to be supposed that *Columba* should have set up such a Form of Government, as he plainly did among the *Picts*, (and he being a *Presbyter*, could set up no other) if it had not been used in his own Country, or if he had been taught that *Episcopacy* was necessary to a true valid Ordination and God's Acceptance. For it is profitable to observe the Character of *Columba's* Successors, as given by *Bede* *. Altho *Bede* differed from him in the Point of Celebration of *Easter*, yet he observes, "That *Columba* left behind him Successors, eminent on the account of their great Continen-
 " Divine Love, and
 " a regular Government: That in regard of the Festi-
 " vals, they followed uncertain Calculations, having
 " lived in an obscure Part of the World, the Decrees
 " of Synods had not reached them; (happy Men, if
 " we consider what follows!) that they had only learnt
 " what was contained in the Writings of the *Prophets*,
 " *Evangelists*, and *Apostles*." Now 'tis not easy to be supposed that Men of such a Temper should give and receive Orders, being only *Presbyters*, had they learnt that a *Bishop* superiour in Office had been necessary to them. Had they looked into the Decrees of Synods, which *Bede* saith had not reached them, they would have learnt a *Bishop* was necessary; but it seems having learnt their Religion from their Bible, they had not learnt the Necessity of *Episcopacy* to the Being of the Church.

But those who find this Story unfavourable to their own Schemes of the Necessity of *Episcopacy*, tell us, That there was always a *Bishop* in *Huy* to confer Orders, and therefore the Succession was kept up. This being the sole Objection, and indeed an entire Contradiction to all our Reasoning, something must be said to remove it, and several things offer themselves.

1. It is an Assertion of an obscure unknown Author, and therefore not much to be regarded. The Pas-

* Lib. 3. cap. 4.

Page is borrowed from some Manuscript Annals, that belonged to some of the Abbies of *Ulster*, which fell into the hands of the venerable *Usher*, who for ought I know is the first that mentions them; but we are nowhere told, that I meet with, who it was wrote them, at what time it was wrote, or what Credit it deserves: and certainly the Work of some idle Monk, entirely unknown to us, and never yet thought worth the printing, should not be of any historical weight with us: especially if we consider,

2. That it is a Passage of a single obscure Author, not confirmed by the Historians that lived near the time, but rather contradicted by one of them. *Adamnanus*, who was Abbot of *Huy*, in a little more than two hundred Years after *Columba*, and wrote his Life, is silent, I presume, upon this Story of a Bishop being there always. From him we have a blind Story of *Columba's* refusing to consecrate the Eucharist, when some Stranger Bishop was accidentally there. But what a small Piece of Submission was this to a Bishop, in comparison of keeping one constantly to perform Orders and Offices? And if he had done so, as the Objection supposes, it is not to be imagined that *Adamnanus* would have omitted, or that others who have seen the Life would not have quoted it: which they not having done, plainly invalidates the Credit of the Objection, and shews the *Ulster Annals* deserve no Credit, since they are not confirmed by the most antient Author who lived in the Abby, where this Bishop is said always to reside, and yet never, I suppose, mentions any such thing. Besides,

3. As *Adamnanus* never mentions a Bishop as constantly resident there; so *Bede*, who was a cotemporary Writer, rather contradicts it, by ascribing the Ordinations performed in the Abbey of *Huy*, not to any Bishop constantly resident there, but to the Abbot and his Presbyters, as is plain *: where speaking concerning *Aidan* (a Person we shall have occasion after to mention) who received the Degree of *Episcopacy* that he might come for *England*, he tells us, that he received his Orders from the Abbot and his *Conventus Seniorum*, as we shall

* Lib. 3. cap. 5.

more expressly shew by and by. This therefore overthrows the Assertion of the obscure *Ulster Annals*, since if they always had a Bishop at *Huy* to give Orders, it would be as improper an Expression to say, the *Abbot Presbyter*, and his *Presbyters* ordained, as *Bede* saith they did; as to say in the Church of *England*, the Bishop's Chaplain (who is a *Presbyter*) gives Orders, because he lays on Hands sometimes with the Bishop, which every one knows is a Form of Speech not to be borne among us: so that I think I have shewn the obscure *Ulster Annals* deserve no Credit in this Affair.

To proceed therefore in the Account of the settling Christianity in *North-Britain*, and the Practices of the *Presbyters* there; *Bede* tells us, that another Person had been sent into *England* before *Aidan*, who returned without Success, having not been able to make any Impression upon the Inhabitants in favour of Christianity, and that he gave an Account of his bad Success in *Conventu Seniorum*, in the Assembly of the *Elders*. Upon this, after much Enquiry, *Aidan* tells the Person, who before tho called a *Bishop*, yet is here called a *Priest*, wherein he had mistook in his Conduct towards them. The [*Conventus Seniorum*] Assembly of *Elders* before spoke of, judge *Aidan* worthy of the *Episcopacy*, and to go and convert the Ignorant; sicq; *illum ordinantes ad pradicandum miserunt*; i. e. the *Conventus Seniorum*, before spoke of, ordaining him, sent him to preach. So that tho there was a *Bishop* sent from the Abbey of *Huy*, yet he was ordained by the *Presbyter, Abbot, and Elders*, and therefore not the Bishop now pretended to. And that which seems observable here, is, that it appears by these and such like Passages in *Bede*, that it was their manner, when they sent out Missionaries to preach in the Country, or undertake any fixed Post, that they called them *Bishops*; for so *Aidan, Tinan, Colman, &c.* are called, tho ordained by *Elders*, and subject to the *Abbot of Huy*, when they came thither again.

But having thus shewn Christianity settled by *Presbyters* without Bishops of an higher Order in *Scotland*, let us from thence,

S E C T. III.

3dly, Pass on to consider the State of Christianity in South Britain; whither the Saxons are now come. And we shall find Christianity begun and carried on among them by Presbyters, or such Persons, who tho' called Bishops, yet received their Ordination from Presbyters: For this Aidan, whom we last mentioned, was the Person who had the Honour to make the greatest Impression in England in favour of Christianity; and of him we have shewn that he was ordained by the Abbot Presbyter and his Elders. But before we come to give the History of Aidan, and his Success, we may observe, that Pope Gregory sending Augustine to attempt the Conversion of the Saxons, he settled at last at Canterbury, of which he was made Archbishop; that one Paulinus, ordained Bishop by Justus * Archbishop of Canterbury, was the Instrument of carrying Christianity into Northumberland upon this occasion: Edwin King of Northumberland marrying Edelberga the Sister of Eadbald King of Kent, who was a Christian, she brought along with her this Paulinus, by whose Persuasions some Impressions in favour of Christianity were made upon the King, and at last he was baptized at York at Easter 627. abundance of the Nobility following his Example. By his means also Christianity was carried into the Kingdom of the East Angles, and great Numbers were baptized in the River Trent. But whilst Christianity seemed to bid thus fair for a general Settlement, a Stop was put to it by the Death of Edwin, who was slain in Battel, and by the Death of the King of the East Angles; upon which (as Dr. Inet observes) the People generally revolted and fell back to Idolatry †. This unhappy Stroke fell about 633. In this Condition Christianity lay expiring for some time, but was revived again upon this Occasion: Oswald, the Son of Echelfride. (who was King of the Northumbrians before Edwin) being driven into Scotland upon Edwin's seizing the Kingdom, was

* Vid. Dr. Inet's Hist. Engl. Church, Vol. 1. chap. 4.

† Bede, lib. 2. cap. 2.

thereby brought to the Christian Religion; and after the Slaughter of *Edwin*, coming with a small Force, recovered his Father's Kingdom from *Cedwalla* and *Penda*, who had slain *Edwin*, and tyrannized there for about a Year *, and thereupon gave a Revival to Christianity. And instead of sending for *Paulinus* (who upon the Death of *Edwin* was returned with *Edelberga* the Queen, with whom he came into *Kent*, and was placed in the See of *Rochester*;) he sends to the *Scots*, amongst whom he had received the Christian Religion, to send him a Prelate, as *Bede* calls him: and accordingly from the Abby of *Huy* is this *Aidan* sent, who received the Degree of Episcopacy, as we have shewn above, from the Assembly of Elders in the Abby of *Huy*. He was fixed in the See of *Lindissarn*, or *Holy Island* in *Northumberland*, and laboured with great Success: for tho he was not expert in the *English* Language himself, yet as he was preaching, it was beautiful to observe the King himself, who perfectly understood both the *Scotch* and *English* Language, would explain to his Captains and Officers what *Aidan* preach'd. Thus we see Christianity was revived in *England* by the means of a Person who received his Orders from the Abbot and Elders of *Huy*. And tho he and others are sometimes called Bishops, yet it is plain they could not be such in the modern Sense, because *Columba*, who was the first Converter, from whom they all derived, was but a *Presbyter*, and from him no Bishops in the modern Sense could derive. This *Aidan*, after he had laboured with a great deal of Success in the spreading of Christianity, and sat in the See of *Lindissarn* for seventeen Years, died, and was succeeded by *Finan*, who was appointed to the Bishoprick from the Island and Monastery of † *Huy*; so that he could have no other Orders than what the *Presbyter* Abbot of *Huy* and his Elders gave him. This *Finan* was the Instrument of carrying Christianity amongst the *Mercians*, as *Dr. Inet* || tells us: For *Penda*, King of *Mercia* (Son of the former *Penda*, who had committed

* *Bede*, lib. 3. cap. 3.

† *Ibid.* cap. 17.

|| P. 55. from *Bede*, lib. 3. c. 2.

such Outrages in *Northumbria*, before *Oswald* came to the Crown, (as we mentioned above) requiring in Marriage the Daughter of *Oswald*, obtained her upon no other Terms than the embracing Christianity: Who after he had heard the preaching of the Truth, the Promise of the Heavenly Kingdom, the Hope of the Resurrection, the future Immortality, freely proposed himself persuaded to be a Christian, even tho he could not have received the Princess he desired; and was accordingly baptized by *Finan*, with all the Persons who came with him. *Penda* afterward returning home, took along with him four Presbyters, in order to spread Christianity thro his Country, whose Names were *Cedda*, *Adda*, *Betti*, *Englishmen*, and *Dinma* a Scot, who after some time was ordained a Bishop by the *Mercians* and *Midangles*; the Scarcity of Priests excusing it, that one Person should be placed over two People. He was ordained by *Finan* (who, as we have shewn above, had his Orders from the Presbyter Abbot of *Huy* and his Elders, and therefore could not secure the Episcopal Succession now boasted of) and succeeded by *Ceolla*, who was of the *Scotish* Nation, and therefore one may presume had his Orders from thence, and who leaving the Episcopacy, returned to *Huy*. And from hence succeeds him in the Episcopacy a religious Man of a Monastick Life of the *English* Nation, but ordained by the *Scots*, as *Bede* † tells us. But while they are carrying on Christianity in *Mercia*, the Kingdom of the *East-Saxons* is inclined to embrace Christianity under *Sigbert* their King, who was persuaded by *Oswi*, the Son of *Oswald*, King of the *Northumbrians*: For this *Oswi* being oft visited by *Sigbert*, was wont to exhort him to consider, that those were not Gods that were made by Men, but that he should rather consider God as incomprehensible in Majesty, and invisible to human Eyes, omnipotent, eternal, who made Heaven and Earth, and the whole Race of Mankind, governs, and will judge the World in Righteousness; and that all those who learn and do his Will, by whom they were created, shall obtain eternal Rewards. With such Reasonings as these *Oswi*

† Lib. 3. cap. 21.

persuaded his Friend *Sigbert* to embrace the Christian Religion, who was accordingly baptized by *Finan*; and carrying home with him the like Inclinations to propagate it among his Subjects, upon this occasion *Cedda* is recalled from *Mercia*, and sent among the *East-Saxons*, where he* laboured with great Success. Returning into *Northumbria* to confer with *Finan*, he was ordained by *Finan* (of whom *Bede*† saith, that he was ordained and sent by the Scots) and two other Bishops, who must be such as himself, Bishops of the *East-Saxons*; and *Cedda* returning home, ordained other Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. He was himself, as one tells‡ us, Bishop of London, and therefore stands at the Head of that See, tho his Orders must be defective according to the present Notions of some Men: And when after the Death of *Cedda* some of the People apostatized, they were reduced, as the same** Author tells us. They were reclaimed by a *Mercian* Bishop, educated in the Discipline, and receiving the Orders of the *Scottish* Church.

Thus have I traced the Succession of Christianity in *England*, so far as is necessary to shew, that we are not capable of claiming an uninterrupted Succession of Episcopacy, because we received Christianity in a great measure from the *Scots*, who were converted by *Columba a Presbyter*, who therefore could convey no other Orders than that of a Presbyter; that tho they had Persons whom they called Bishops, yet they were such as were ordained by the Presbyter Abbot and his Elders, and were subject to him. These therefore, wherever they came, administered Orders; and wherever they gave Orders, perplexed the Succession, and broke in upon this boasted Line.

So that tho there were some that derived from *Rome*, and others that derived from *France*, yet these *Scottish* Conversions were much more numerous, and the Persons that they ordained joining in such After-Ordinations that came in their way, have so perplexed this boasted Line, as to render it incapable of being

* *Bede*, lib. 3. cap. 22.

† Lib. 3. c. 25.

‡ *Dr. Inet*, Vol. I. pag. 56.

** *Ibid.*

proved; nay, rather it makes it highly probable it never was kept up, and could never be maintained amongst us.

But it will possibly be objected, that *Bede* does not call in question the *Scotish* Ordinations. To this I answer,

1. That the whimsical Supposition of a necessity of an uninterrupted Succession of Episcopacy was not then grown to the height it hath since been advanced to. And,

2. It is plain from *Bede*, that the *Scotish* Ordinations were esteemed uncanonical, as appears from the Story of *Ceadda*, the Brother of *Cedde*, who when he was to be ordained Bishop of *York*, travelled from *Canterbury* to *Winchester*, (tho there were Christian Bishops in most Parts of the Kingdom) to *Wine* Bishop of *Winchester*, who *Bede* saith was the only canonical Bishop in *Great Britain*; by which he plainly casts an Imputation of Irregularity upon the *Scotish* Ordinations. But,

3. That which seems to put the matter out of all doubt, that the *Scotish* Ordinations were in After-Times reputed uncanonical, because they were originally the Ordination of Presbyters, as we have above shewn them to be, is, That after the *English* had submitted fully to the *Romish* See, and repeated this Submission by several of their Archbishops, and received many of the Rites of *Rome*, which they were before strangers to, there was a Synod held at *Calcuth*, *An.* 816. the 5th Canon whereof would not allow the *Scotish* Clergy, who travelled hither, the Exercise of their Office without Reordination, (even when the *Scots* had complied in the Point of *Easter*;) and the Reason given, is, because it was uncertain by whom they were ordained; tho, without doubt, they had the Orders of their own Church. But the Suspicion laid upon that was, its being but the Ordination of Presbyters, as from *Bede* we have shewn it could be no other. And it is most probable this was the reason of their requiring Reordination, because they had done so in the case of the *Boiarii*, a People of *Germany*, who received the Christian Faith by the preaching of Presbyters about 540, and had no Bishop among them till *Vivilo* was sent

sent about 700 by Pope *Zachary*; who also writing to *Winfred*, whom he sent to visit them, That since *Winfred* had sent him word, that this Nation had lived without Ecclesiastical Order, and had no Bishop but *Vivollo*, *Zachary* directs, that those Presbyters whom he found there, if it was unknown by whom they were ordained, and it was doubtful whether they were Bishops or no, by whom they were ordained, that then they should receive from the Bishop the Blessing of the Presbyterate, and be * consecrated again, that they might perform their Ministry.

From this Practice of the *Romish* Church in the case of the *Boians*, it is reasonable to think the *Scots* were reordained, because ordained by Presbyters, as we have shewn above they could have no other Ordination. Thus it is incapable of Proof, that the Succession should be kept up amongst us, nay most probable that it was broken.

CHAP. III.

BUT I come now to the *Third* general Head, which is to shew, that if there was such an Order of Bishops deriving in an uninterrupted Succession from the Apostles, intended to be set up; yet it is certain, it hath been broken by Schisms and Interruptions, so that no Argument can be drawn from that Line. I have already shewn what our Circumstances are in these Parts of the World. I have shewn, that we are ignorant of the first Planters of Christianity among us, and of their Quality: That tho Christianity was among us 580 Years almost before the coming of *St. Austin*, yet we can give no manner of account now, whether the Succession of Bishops was kept up, or was intended to be kept up. I have shewn, that *Austin* did very little toward the Conversion of the *Saxons*; but that the principal Work was perform'd by the Missionaries of the *Scotish* Church from the *Abbey Huy*,

* Vid. *Owen's* Plea for Scripture Ordination.

where the *Abbot*, who was a *Presbyter*, and his *Elders*, conferr'd Orders, as we have shewn above. These therefore could not maintain the Succession. But we are now to carry on our Enquiries farther, and examine the Pretences of the *Church of Rome*, which pretends to such a Succession, and shews us a Bead-Roll of Names from *St. Peter* to the present Pope.

But in order to shew the Weakness of this Allegation, it is proper to make these or the like Reflections.

1. That it is uncertain who was the Root of this Succession at *Rome*, neither *Luke* in the *Acts*, nor *Paul* in his *Epistles*, mentioning any thing of their Conversion by *Peter*, nor what other Person it was that planted the Church first there. And yet if *Peter* had converted them, it is somewhat strange, that *Luke* who mentions his Journeys to *Samaria*, *Lydda*, and *Toppa*, to *Casarea*, and *Jerusalem*, should not mention his Journey to *Rome*, for the planting of that Church.

2. Supposing *St. Peter* was the Founder of that Church, yet it still remains uncertain by whom the Succession was carried on: For those that give us a Catalogue of the first Bishops of *Rome*, are not agreed in the Succession. Let us come therefore to *Rome*; and here the Succession is as muddy as the *Tyber* itself. For *Tertullian*, *Ruffinus*, and others, place *Clement* next to *Peter*: *Irenaeus* and *Eusebius* set *Linus* and *Anacletus* before him: Others place *Clement* next *Linus*; and then *Cletus*, and then *Anacletus*: others think them both one Person. Thus various and uncertain are those Accounts concerning the Line of Succession, which must render all our Reasonings from it uncertain and perplexed. But further,

3. Supposing there should have been such a Succession of Persons from *St. Peter* as are mentioned, yet those who are mentioned as his next Successors might not be a Succession of *Diocesan Bishops superior in Office to Presbyters*, but rather a number of *Presbyters* that governed the Church in common. *Presbyters* they are call'd by || *Irenaeus*, who having occasion to mention

|| Fragment of the Epistle to *Victor*, about the *Easter Controversies*.

the

the Practice of the Church of *Rome* before *Soter*, he calls them the Presbyters that governed the Church, which he now presided over. And when we consider the Uncertainty of the Accounts concerning the order in which they succeeded, sometimes one, sometimes another being mentioned as the immediate Successor of *St. Peter* and *Paul*, and so the like Variation in the account of the second and third Successors; it is not improbable, that they might govern the Church together in common as Presbyters, (for such *Irenaeus* calls them) and that their governing the Church in common, is no improbable Conjecture. I find it espoused by the learned *Vossius*, and † maintained by him, where he lays down this as the Form of Government in the *Roman Church*: 1. *Linus*, *Cletus*, *Anacletus*. 2. *Cletus*, *Anacletus*, and *Clemens*. 3. *Cletus*, *Anencletus*. 4. *Anencletus Solus*. 5. *Evaristus*, who began a Succession of single Persons, where as before there used to be two or three. The Reasons by which he enforceth this Order, are the Acts of Pope *Damasus*, who saith expressly, that *Peter* ordained two Bishops, *Linus* and *Cletus*, to govern the People, while he gave himself to Prayer and Preaching. And he observes, this Passage is not in the printed Books, but in the written Copy, and so are quoted by *Marianus Scotus*. *Linus* being taken away by Martyrdom, *Clemens* is put in his place with *Cletus*.

And this he proves thus: *Cletus* is said to sit from *Ann.* 76. to 83. *Clemens* is said to sit from 68. to 79. Therefore these two Persons coincide; but the former Quotation from *Damasus* shews that *Cletus* was made Pastor before 76, yea by the Apostle himself; and then he shews, that tho *Clement* was sent into Banishment about 79, yet *Cletus* was not alone, but *Anencletus* with him, who survived all these, and suffered Martyrdom about 95. He observes, that *Eusebius* was the first who assign'd to the distinct Persons, certain Years one succeeding another, who did very ill, because, according to him, *Clement* succeeded *Anencletus* *Anno* 93. whereas the Epistle written in his Name, was writ during the standing of the Temple, i. e. before the

† Voss. 2 Ep. ad fin. Cla. Cotellerii.

ear 71. But see the Epistle itself. By all this it appears that these several Persons, *Linus, Cletus, Anacle-*
tus, were not so many Dioceſan Biſhops that governed
 the Church of *Rome*, one ſucceeding another; but ſo
 many Presbyters (as *Irenaeus* calls 'em) that governed
 that Church, ſometimes two, and ſometimes three to-
 gether, *Evaristus* being the firſt who governed it with
 his Collegues.

By which we ſee, that the Line of Succeſſion of
 Dioceſan Biſhops fails us upon our firſt ſetting out in
 that Church which makes the greateſt boaſts of it.

But I would obſerve farther, that if we are miſta-
 ken in our Reasonings under the laſt Head, and the
 Church of *Rome* ſhould prove to have a Succeſſion of
 Biſhops from the Apoſtles, yet this will no ways af-
 fect our Caſe in *England*; for we derive not the Line
 of our Succeſſion now in being from them, but from
 the Abbot of *Huy*, who was himſelf a *Presbyter*, and
 the *Presbyters* that attended him, as I have ſhewn un-
 der the former general Head.

Therefore I obſerve, that ſuppoſing there was a Suc-
 ceſſion of Perſons ſitting in the See of *Rome*, and ſup-
 poſing we in *England* could keep up our Succeſſion of
 Episcopacy, either by means of a Biſhop in the Abbey
 of *Huy*, as the *Ulſter Annals* ſay, or by means of the
 Biſhop of *Derry*, as the *Annals of Derry* ſaid, before
 the *Irish Wars* deſtroyed them, as Biſhop *Bramhall*
 tells us; (Authorities that deſerve no more regard
 than the Stories of the ſeven Champions of *Chriſten-*
dom, and which nothing but a fondneſs for an Hy-
 potheſis could have induced grave Men to bring them
 in) but ſuppoſing from theſe or any other Proofs
 it appears, that there was a Succeſſion of Men from
 the Apoſtles, either in the Chair at *Rome*, or in the
 Church of *England*; yet will not this Succeſſion of
 Perſons convey Chriſt's Commiſſion, becauſe theſe
 Perſons have been themſelves broke off from the *Chri-*
ſtian Church, to which Chriſt's Commiſſion is confin'd,
 by their having ſunk into abominable Errors in Doc-
 trine, Idolatry in Worſhip, and Corruption in Diſci-
 pline; by which Diſorder, the Church of *Rome*, and
 all other Churches that were in Communion with her,
 were in a ſtate of Schiſm and Antichriſtianism. And
 the

the Church of *Rome* was before the Reformation so far from being a true Church of Christ, that it was an Antichristian Church, and the Pope Antichrist, as the Reformed Church of *England* asserts in her Homilies, in the third Part of the *Homily against the Peril of Idolatry*, p. 69. calling the Church of *Rome*, "An idolatrous Church, a foul, filthy, old, withered Harlot;" and in the sixth Part of the *Homily against Rebellion*, p. 315. calling the Bishop of *Rome*, the *Babylonical Beast of Rome*: and these Homilies are what the present Clergy subscribe, as containing a godly and wholesome Doctrine.

And that she was in such a Schismatical and Antichristian State, is needless to shew by any laboured Proof, since all Protestant Writers against her shew it. For if we look into the Line of Succession in that Church, we shall find their Popes to have been Hereticks, Sodomites, Idolaters, Conjurers, as their own Authors affirm. We shall find them broken in pieces by twenty-four particular Schisms, with two or three Anti-Popes at a time; who had several Successors, each creating Cardinals, and ordaining Prelates, which must unavoidably perplex the ordinary Line of Succession; so that they were rather Apostatical than Apostolical, as *Baronius* himself confesseth.

The Church of *Rome*, by her abominable Idolatry in Worship, and Errors in Doctrine, hath sunk herself into a State of Antichristianism, by which she hath broke herself off from the Christian Church, to whom Christ hath given a Charter of Christian Privileges, and thereby hath shut herself out of the Privileges of that Body to which they before belonged; which they might have enjoyed, had they continued united to that Body. And by this Antichristian State into which she hath cast herself, by embracing those abominable Errors in Doctrine, and Idolatry in Worship, she hath broke off the Ligaments by which the Universal Church is connected to Christ himself, and one Part of it to another; and hath thereby deprived herself of the Rights and Immunities of Christian Societies: and this indeed is what plainly ariseth from the Reason of Things, that they who are not of the Body, cannot convey to others the Powers and Privileges annexed to the Body.

If

If therefore Christ hath given a Charter of Privileges to such a successive Order of Men, yet they who are in a state of Antichristianism, and so out of that Society and Order, cannot convey it: such is the Church of *Rome*, and therefore she cannot convey the Powers and Privileges of the Christian Charter. The matter will perhaps be more plain by a familiar Resemblance.

Let us then consider the Case of a Society incorporated by a Charter from the Sovereign, and by this Charter intitled to certain Rights and Privileges, which may descend to their Successors, or by the consent of the Society be bestowed on others. Now, while Persons continue in the Society, they have a power to join in the Conveyance of the Immunities thereof to others; but if they turn Apostates or Fugitives, or are disfranchis'd for their Misdemeanors, they immediately forfeit their Right to the Privileges thereof, and to any Power of conveying the Privileges to others, and the Succession fails in them: Thus the Church of *Rome* consider'd as a Society united to the Pope as its visible Head before the Reformation, embracing abominable Errors in Doctrine, and Idolatry in Worship, thereby sunk into a state of Antichristianism and Schism; and being thus cut off from the Christian Church, incorporated by Christ's Charter, and united to himself as the sole Head, cannot convey the Rights and Privileges of that Society, any more than a disfranchis'd Burgess, or a Corporation, that hath forfeited its Charter. And thus it follows, that the Ministry cannot be convey'd to the present Time by an uninterrupted Succession, because it hath passed thro the Hands of Antichristian Societies, who could not convey it.

I shall conclude this matter with a Passage from the learned and industrious Mr. *Bingham*, where reasoning with Mr. *Lawrence*, he asks, " Upon what Foot are the Orders of Schismatics valid? Is it because they have equal Authority with the Catholick Priests? If so, whence is their Authority derived? Is it from the Catholick Bishops of the Church? Sure they never intend to authorize Schismatics to perform Offices that belong to the Catholick Clergy; or if

“ they ordain Men to the Offices who immediately
 “ turn Schismatics, and in opposition to the Church
 “ and all her Orders; certainly they forfeit all legal
 “ Right to perform such Offices, at least, after the
 “ Church hath perform'd the * Sentence.”

But it will be objected, That hereby we have destroyed the Orders and Ministrations of the Western Churches, which all of them derive either from the Antichristian Church of *Rome*, or else have sunk into the same state of Corruption and Antichristianism.

To this I answer,

1. That we ought to distinguish between the Case of such Persons that are sincerely promoting the Interest of Religion, tho cast among the Antichristian Churches, and those Persons who are engaged in maintaining the Idolatry and Corruptions of that Antichristian State. The former Reasonings only affect this latter sort; who being actually engaged in supporting an Interest contrary to Christianity, cannot be the authoriz'd Ministers of Christ. But it doth not affect the Case of those, tho they should be cast amongst Antichristian Societies, who being duly qualified, do sincerely give up themselves to the Work of the Ministry, and promoting the Interest of Christ Jesus. These have a sufficient Call from the Societies where they labour, and from the Obligation which every qualified Person is under, to promote the Interest of Christ in the World, as we shall shew more fully afterwards.

2. As to the Right of the Reformers to exercise their Ministry, who might be said to receive Ordination in the Church of *Rome*; I answer, That they did not receive this Call from the Antichristian Society, but from the Call and Invitation of the Christian People who join'd with them, who all joined with the Obligations that they were under from Nature and Reason, to do all the Good they can in the World, sufficiently authorized them, as we shall shew. For as the learned † Mr. *Bingham* observes, (who hath set this Notion in a clear Light) and from whose Pen it will perhaps be better receiv'd. “ The reform'd Church

* *Vid.* Append. to Lay-Baptism, Part I.

† *Hist.* Lay-Baptism, Part I p. 91.

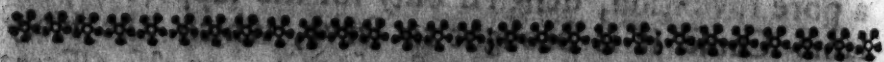
of England, tho before an Heretical and Schismatical Church under the Slavery of the *Romish* Yoke, receiv'd an Authority by shaking off that Yoke, and reforming herself, and thereby returning to the Unity of the Catholick Church; and by virtue of this they have all the Power and Licence to officiate, which they had not before." And for the Confirmation of this he quotes the 8th Canon of the Council of *Nice*, which decreed, "The *Novatians* should continue in the same Station and Clerical Degrees they were in before, upon their returning to the Catholick Church. And therefore he observes, That the first Reformers obtained their Power by returning to this Unity."

He shews also, "That there were always such good Christians among the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*, to whose Unity and Communion the Reformers return'd. Nay, he says, if there had been no Professors of the true Faith, yet it had been sufficient to the first Reformers to have return'd to the Profession of the Faith itself; which is in effect to the Holy Catholick Church, the principal and choice part of whose Unity, is the sincere Faith of the Creed and Scriptures."

3. What I have said before, no ways affects the case of private Persons in those Antichristian Societies, because the Validity of Ordinances depends not on the Authority of the Administrator, but the sincere Faith of him that receives them, as we shall after shew.

But it will be farther objected, That Ministers at their Ordination receive an indelible Character, which neither Heresy nor Schism can obliterate. But this is a pure Invention, design'd only for the support of that lame Cause it is brought to serve, which the Holy Scripture is either an entire stranger to, or else affirms the contrary. For it lays down the Characters and Qualifications of those who minister in Holy Things, and expects they come up to these Characters. And it leads us to judge of pretended Teachers, not by some indelible Characters, which they who talk of know not what it means; but it leads us to judge of them by their Fruits, and answering the Designs and Intentions of their Office; and where they do not, we are

are no longer to consider them as Shepherds of the Flock of Christ, but Wolves in Sheeps Clothing, and as such to withdraw from them. And we may as soon prove a Wolf a good Shepherd, as a Person maintaining and supporting Idolatry and Antichristianism, a true Pastor of the Church of Christ; *Mat. 7. 15, 20.* So when the Apostles chose *Matthias*, they desire Direction of God in the choice of a Person that may take part of that Ministry and Apostleship from which *Judas* by Transgression fell, *Acts 1. 25.* And therefore as the Office may be fallen from, there can be no indelible Character impressed in the conveyance of it. Besides, the Christian Church hath always practised in opposition to this Notion; for they have always undertaken to depose and cast out from the Office Persons whom they thought unworthy of it. And they have not only done this in Synods and Councils met together, but they have justified it when the People have withdrawn themselves from wicked and unworthy Pastors, and chose others: as may be seen in *Cyprian*, in that Epistle wrote in the Name of himself and several Bishops in Council; where they praise the People of *Emerita* and *Asturia* who had deposed *Martialis* and *Basilides*, their Bishops, and chose *Felix* and *Sabinus*. And he saith, the People have the highest Right to chuse worthy Prelates, and reject unworthy ones. This he confirms by their chusing the Deacons in *Acts 6.* and the Candidates to the Apostleship, *Acts 1.* and tells 'em, That by Divine and Apostolical Tradition, that Right was conveyed down; and therefore they ought to observe and hold it: and the same was observ'd thro all the Provinces in *Africa*, as well as with them.



C H A P. IV.

BUT having shewn, that if there was such an Order of Bishops (superiour to Presbyters) intended to be set up, who should in an uninterrupted Line be the sole Instruments of conveying the Powers and Privileges of the Christian Ministry from the Apostles to the End of Time, as necessary to the Being of the Christian

Christian Church, and the Validity of Ministrations therein; yet that these Authorities and Powers cannot reach us in the Western Parts upon this Hypothesis, is plain, because the Line of Succession hath been broken by the Corrupt and Antichristian State in which our Predecessors were:

Fourthly, I proceed now to shew the Fallaciousness of this Hypothesis, by proving, That such a Succession of Bishops (superiour to Presbyters or the Pastors of particular Churches) is not necessary as the sole Instruments of conveying down the Powers and Privileges of the Ministry. And that which will fully clear this matter, is, That it plainly appears from Scripture,

S E C T. I.

I. THAT the same Obligations, Commissions, and Commands, that are given to any of the Ministers of Christ, are given to all, except there be any difference made in the Persons themselves by extraordinary Qualifications, or temporary Appointment: That is, in short, if there be any Obligation to a constant Rule in this matter, there is no more than one Order appointed as of necessary and perpetual Continuance. That the Ministers of Christ are spoken of under several Denominations, is plain; and those who labour'd in this Vineyard, were called by several Names. He gave, we are told, *Apostles, and Prophets, and Evangelists, and Pastors, and Teachers*; but the Scripture never enters into a particular Detail, what their distinct Offices were. As to *Apostles and Prophets*, these appear plainly distinguished from the others by their extraordinary Qualifications, and whose Office was never designed to be of perpetual Use in the Churches, because the Qualifications which these Persons had, are not continued. As to the Officers who are called *Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers*, the Scriptures seem to hint to us a difference in their Work: the one seeming appointed for the gathering of Churches; the other being called so, from their undertaking the Guidance of a Church gathered: But the Scriptures no where give us any Intimation, that there was any difference in

in their real Powers and Commissions that they received by Christ's Charter, or that they might not (had they been so appointed) have changed their Station, and the *Evangelist* have taken the Charge of a particular Church, and the *Pastors* and *Teachers* have been employ'd in gathering other Churches without any new Ordination.

This will appear farther, by considering the Places, which are Commissions, and Directions to the Apostles in their preaching of the Gospel, and planting of Churches. Two Places are to be consulted upon this Occasion. The first Passage is in *Joh. 20. 21, 22, 23.* where our Saviour appearing to his Disciples soon after his Resurrection, tells them, that *as the Father sent him, so he sent them.* This was indeed giving a Commission, but not specifying particularly their Work, much less making any difference in the Order or Degree of those that should come after them. And when he had said this, *he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose Sins ye retain, they are retained.* This plainly shews the Commission here given was peculiar to the Apostles, because the Qualification was peculiar; for it was a peculiar Gift of the discerning of Spirits, in order to the Conduct of themselves and their Actions towards the Person with whom they conversed. For hereby they were empowered to discern the Sincerity of the Penitent, and the Hypocrisy of those who were yet in the Gall of Bitterness; that they might absolve and remit the Penitent, and punish the Hypocrite: and by this Faculty of discerning, they exerted their Powers towards *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, *Acts 5.* towards *Simon Magus*, towards the incestuous Person in the Church of *Corinth*, whose Sins were first bound on him, and afterwards remitted upon his Repentance, *1 Cor. 5. 4. & 2 Cor.* But however these or the like Powers are contained in this Commission, yet no one can now claim them, unless so qualified as the Apostles were. The other Passage is in *Matth. 28. 19, 20.* where our Saviour came unto them, and said, *All Power both in Heaven and in Earth is given unto me. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; teaching them to*

serve all things whatsoever I have commanded; and to I
 with you always unto the End of the World. It creates
 some Difficulty in the understanding of this Commis-
 sion, that all the particular Acts of a Minister's Work
 are not describ'd; such as Administration of the Lord's
 Supper, nor any thing of the Administration of Disci-
 pline, nor about the Method and Powers of Ordina-
 tion. But however, not to enter upon that now, we
 will suppose, that all the Powers and Directions neces-
 sary for the Preservation and Propagation of Christiani-
 ty, are either expressed or implied in this Commis-
 sion: For it seems to be the last personal Direction
 Christ gave for the Discharge of the Apostle's Work;
 and therefore whatever ministerial Acts are to be used
 in the planting of Christianity, are expressed or im-
 plied in this Commission. And farther; it is also as
 plain, that whatever is the Design of the Commission,
 it makes no Distinction in the Works and Powers of
 it: As if some part of it might be done by one, that
 might not be done by another; or as if it intended to
 erect different Degrees or Orders in the Work. And
 truly, if we cannot find a Distinction of Orders or
 Degrees where the Commission is given, we shall scarce
 find it elsewhere. However, the Commission makes
 no difference; for whoever is empowered by the Com-
 mission to do one Part of the ministerial Work, is
 empowered to do the whole. The Commission does
 not assign one to ordain, confirm, and make Laws,
 &c. which latter Ages have dress'd up a *Bishop* for;
 and another to preach and administer the Sacraments,
 (but not confirm or ordain) which is the *Presbyters*
 Work now; and a third sort only to preach and bap-
 tize, (but not perform the other specified Work) which
 is now the Work of a *Deacon*. No such Distinction as
 this is made by this Commission; but he that by the
 Commission is empowered to do one part of the Work,
 is empowered to do the whole.

It therefore plainly appears, that our Saviour hath not
 appointed more than one Order of Ministers in his
 Church, (unless so far as extraordinary Qualifications
 make any difference) and consequently could not ap-
 point an Order of Bishops superior to Pastors of parti-
 cular Churches, as necessary to the Being and Conti-

nuance of his Church, and the Validity of Ordinances therein, the Commission having made no such difference.

But it will perhaps be objected, That if this Commission makes no difference, yet the Apostles, who were invested with sufficient Authority, might afterward make a Distinction and Partition of the Offices. We find in Holy Scripture mention made of *Bishops, Priests* and *Deacons*, which seem Officers of different Orders and Degrees in the Christian Church: And this I go next to consider, *viz.* whether other Passages of Scripture establish such a Distinction of Degrees and Offices which later Ages have invented. And in the *First* place I shall consider the *Presbyters* Office, and then *Secondly* the *Deacons*.

S E C T. II.

I. LET us consider what Account the Scripture give us of the Office or Work of those whom they call *Presbyters*; whether there was any real Distinction in the Work and Business of a *Presbyter* and a *Bishop*. By the Commission we have seen the Powers were equal; but did the Apostles make any Distinction? It appears not that they did: and therefore,

1. If we consider the following Texts, it will appear their Work was the same as to Acts of Government. Let us consult what the Apostle saith, *Acts* 20 17--28. That being at *Miletus*, he sent to *Ephesus* for the *Elders of the Church*; and there takes his Leave of them in a most affectionate Speech, full of serious Warnings, Exhortations and Counsels, which he then looked upon as likely to be the last time of his seeing them, as appears plainly from the 25th Verse, (whether he did afterwards see them or not, I leave to others to dispute) and therefore to be sure would give them his last Instructions for the settling and managing of the Church. And accordingly, in the 28th Verse, he charges the *Elders* to *take heed to themselves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops*. (How our Translators came to call this *Overseers*, as they have done in other places, where *Presbyters* have had it applyed to them; and yet to turn it *Bishop* where *Presbyters* were not spoken of in the Sentence; I know not, unless to serve an Hypothesis,

esis, and impose on the unlearned Reader.) Here therefore Presbyters are declared Bishops of the Holy Ghost's making; which sufficiently shews the Work of Bishop and Presbyter the same. They are bid also to feed the Flock; which, considering the Metaphor, is to perform all necessary Acts of Teaching and Government to the Flock. It is also farther observable, that they are declared to be Bishops of the Holy Ghost's making, even in the Presence of *Timothy*, who was in the Apostle's Company at that time, as appears by the 14th Verse.

But in order to evade the Force of this Argument, we are told, that the Elders of *Ephesus* here spoken of, were indeed the Bishops of the Churches of Asia. But as this is without any colour from the Text itself, so it is contrary to the Apostle *Paul's* Circumstances, who plainly appears to be in some haste in this Journey to arrive at *Jerusalem* by the Feast: and the reason of his sending for the Elders to *Miletus*, was, because he should be too much straitned. Had he called at *Ephesus*, he could not have got away so soon, which renders it unlikely he should send for all the Pastors of the Churches of Asia. In short, both the Letter of the Text, and the Circumstances of the Apostle's Case, lead us to believe they were the Elders of the particular Church of *Ephesus*, who are here declared to be made Bishops by the Holy Ghost: or whether they were the Elders of other Churches or no, it serves our present Purpose; for it is the Presbyters of those Churches that are declared to be made Bishops by the Holy Ghost: so that their Office was one and the same. We may gather the same from *Jam. 5. 14.* where he directs them: *Is there any Sick, let them send for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over them.* By which it appears, that the Care of the Church then lay upon Presbyters. But let them look also into *1 Peter 5. 1, 2.* where he exhorts the Elders (who himself was an Elder) to feed the Flock of God which was among them, taking the Episcopacy or the Episcopal Office, (which our Translators have turned Oversight, lest the Presbyters should share in the Honour of Episcopacy:) and he tells them, That if they did so, they should be so far from being condemned as Usurpers of an Office that

that did not belong to them (as they are now told) that they should receive a Crown of Glory when the Chief Shepherd should appear. By all this it is manifest, that their Work and Office was the same, and their Authority over the Flock, in the Guidance and Teaching of it, the same.

2. It appears their Work was the same, because their Names and Appellations were common in Scripture: the Presbyters were called Bishops, and their Bishops Elders; which must needs be very improper if their Office and Commission was not the same. *1 Tim. 3.* describes the Work and Office of the Bishop, without mentioning of the Presbyter, which shews that it was a common Name: For it appears, *Titus 1. 5, 6, 7.* that Titus was left in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain Elders in every City, who must be blameless, &c. and then he goes on with the Reason of it; For a Bishop must be blameless as the Steward of God, to stop the Mouths of vain Talkers: So that Elders that must be blameless, *Verse 6.* are the Bishops that must be blameless, *Verse 7.* which shews that they were indifferently called by the same Name.

In the beginning of the Epistle to the *Philippians*, the Apostle writes to the Bishops and Deacons of that Church, taking in by the name of Bishops the Elders of the Church. This is enough to shew, that though those who had the Pastoral Care of the Church were called Bishops and Presbyters, yet there was not any Distinction of Office or Commission intended by it, but indeed a Community of Names, and a Community of Work and Care in the Guidance and Teaching of the Church. But this may suffice, to have shewn from Scripture, that they have the same Commission and Work assigned them, which might be sufficient to end the Controversy: but the Impatience of Men who found themselves incapable of defending their Hypotheses from Scripture, has sought Sanctuary in the Fathers, (which indeed is but going into a Wood to lose the Controversy). Therefore it may not be amiss to mention a few Passages out of the many that are brought upon this Occasion, and even follow them thither.

Clement,

Clement, in his Epistle, written to the *Corinthians* about the Year 75, some say; or 95, say others; to allay a Schism broke out amongst them, tells them, p. 42. *That the Apostles going about preaching, ordained Bishops and Deacons; under Bishops taking in Elders,* appears by another Passage in this Epistle: For this Edition in the Church was occasioned by an Attempt to cast out the Presbyters. Now Clement blames them sharply for it, and says, *their Sin would not be small, if without cause they cast the Presbyters out of the Episcopacy,* p. 44. And it is observable, that Polycarp writing to the Church of *Philippi*, bids them *be subject to the Presbyters and Deacons*, and gives particular Advice to each, but mentions no superiour Officer, Sect. 5. This was wrote in the beginning of the second Century: but it must be observed, that some of the Writers of this Century mention a greater Difference of the Office and Officers than had been done in the first Century; but yet not so much as will amount to make them essentially distinct Offices and Powers. For it appears, that whereas before the Church seemed to be governed by a number of Persons of equal Rank in the Church, and indifferently called by the name of Bishops or Elders; now there seems to be one Person who had the principal Care of the Church, and was called a Bishop; and yet the Presbyters were his ordained Assistants, that were capable of performing all the Parts of his Office in his Absence, or with his Licence. However, some Distinction there was: for the Bishop of the second Century was Congregational. Of this the Epistles of *Ignatius* are a full Proof. In the Epistle to *Smyrna*, Sect. 8. he bids them *do nothing without the Bishop, particularly neither baptize nor celebrate the Eucharist or Love-Feast; and that where the Bishop is, there should the Church be.* And writing to Polycarp, he bids him *know all by Name, and not despise the Men-Servants and Maid-Servants.* And if I might step into the beginning of the third Century, *Tertullian* tells us, that *they received the Sacrament then from the Hands of the President.* And if we go a little lower to those Writings called the* *Apostolical Canons and Constitutions*, the

* Lib. 2. Cap. 36.

matter is further clear: For it appears to be the Custom of the People, however it is recommended to them, that they go to the *Bishops Church* to pray, before they go to work in Morning, and at Evening when they return from work.

By all this it appears plain, that the Bishop's Cure was Congregational, and so not different from the Presbyter's Care.

3. I come now to shew, that the Presbyters were capable of performing all the Bishop's other Work in his Absence, or with his Licence: that they preached, baptized, or administered the Eucharist, is out of question. But the great Enquiry is about Acts of Government and Ordination; and this being an Enquiry of principal Importance, let us look back into the Scriptures, and trace the matter thro them into Ecclesiastical History.

It's plain the Presbyters sat in Church-Consistories, by the Council at *Jerusalem*, Acts 15. and the Phrase of *feeding the Flock*, which is a Metaphor taken from the Shepherd's Work, being applied to them, shews the Care of the Church in all its Parts lay upon them, as the Care of the Flock lies upon the Shepherd. But I believe the principal part of the Enquiry is, whether we can find them concerned in Ordination? And in our Enquiry into the Scripture Account of this matter, we may observe,

1. That the Scripture no where limits the Business of the Imposition of Hands to any particular Set of Officers, whether Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons, or Evangelists, or whatever Name they are called by. There is no such Command, that only you Bishops, or you Presbyters, or you Deacons, &c. shall lay on Hands; and therefore I am sure no one can prove it limited to any of those sort of Officers.

2. It is observable, that when the Act of Imposition of Hands or Ordination is spoken of, or supposed in Scripture, it is never said to be done by a Person who in Scripture is called a Bishop; but it is indeed said, or implied, that it is done by those called Presbyters. The Apostles themselves are never in Scripture called Bishops, but the Apostle *Peter* called himself a Presbyter,

er, 1 Pet. 5. 1. and so *John* calls himself, 2 Ep. *John* 1. and 3 Ep. *John* 1.

Titus, who was left in *Crete* to ordain *Elders*, has no particular Appellation; but if he is of the same Office with *Timothy*, we have an Appellation for him; for he is expressly required to do the Work of an Evangelist, 1 Tim. 4. 5. but is never called a Bishop. But tho Ordination or Imposition of Hands be never said to be performed by the Persons that are called Bishops in Scripture, yet it cannot be denied to be done by the Persons who are called Presbyters: for *Timothy* is expressly said to receive the Gift, which he was required to stir up, by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery. I am not insensible of several Arts used to wiredraw such Passages to serve an Hypothesis; but if the Scriptures design to speak to be understood, we may certainly collect, that here is no one ministerial Act that a Bishop can be supposed to do, but what is to be done by Persons called Presbyters. Nay, I have shewn here, that the Act of Imposition of Hands, is never said to be done by Persons that ever had the Appellation of Bishops, but is expressly said to be done by the Presbytery. And to pretend, that they were Bishops of an higher Order, tho called Elders, is only to make the Scriptures speak improperly, that their Hypothesis may not seem absurd. And it seems not likely that Persons performing, according to this Supposition, the highest Act of the ministerial Office, and one peculiarly limited to themselves, should be called in the doing of it by the name of an Officer who is supposed to be entirely shut out from the Administration of those solemn Acts. And, in short, had *Timothy* been said to receive this Gift from the Hands of a Bishop, it would have been thought decisive of the Controversy in favour of Episcopacy: But since it is said to be given by the Hands of the Presbytery, it ought to be as decisive the other way. The matter being settled in Scripture, and the Presbyters Right to ordain being found there, we need not be much solicitous.

2dly, As to the Practice of After-Ages, wherein the Presbyters were in many places shut out, tho they retained it in *Alexandria*, as we have shewn above; where by laying the Testimony of *Jerom* and *Eutychius*

together, it appears, that the Presbyters chose one amongst themselves, whom they created Bishop, and laid their Hands on him, and blessed him. And in other Churches they held it so low as the Council of *Ancyra*, *An.* 314. where Country Bishops were not allowed to ordain; nor City Presbyters, without the Command or Letters of the Bishop; which shews they did it before, and had it inherent in their Office, and were only restrained from it by Ecclesiastical Rules: for the Bishop's Command and Letter could give no new Powers, but only take off the Ecclesiastical Suspension. In short, the Sum of our Reasoning under this Head, is, That it appears from Scripture, and the Writings of the greatest Antiquity, that the Office of Bishop and Presbyter was originally the same, and their Work the same. And tho the second Century, and lower, made some Distinction in many Churches, yet this seemed to flow from the Rules of Ecclesiastical Policy, rather than any Opinion of an essential Difference in the Office. One thing I cannot but wonder at, *viz.* That the Name of *Bishop* should so much out-grow that of *Elder* in latter Ages, since in Scripture it should seem that *Presbyter* was the most honourable Appellation, the *Apostles* calling themselves by that Name, but never *Bishops*. For as the learned † *Stillingfleet* observes, "That the Name of *Presbyter* among the *Jews*, signified not only Dignity, but Power; but under the Gospel, the *Apostles* retaining the Name, but not designing to give the Judiciary Power which the *Jewish* Presbyters had, made use of another Word to qualify the Importance of the word *Presbyter*: and this was the occasion of the word *Bishop's* being applied to the Governors of the Church; a Name importing Duty more than Honour, and not a little above *Presbyter*, but rather used by way of Diminution, and Qualification of the Power implied in the Name *Presbyter*. And therefore to shew what Power and Duty the Name *Presbyter* implied, the Office is called *ἐπισκοπή*, and *Presbyters* are said *ἐπισκοπεῖν*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 2. where it is opposed to *κατακυριεύειν*, or lording it over God's He-

* *Irenicum*, p. 285.

ritage, which the *Jewish* Elders did : So that if we determine Things by the Importance of Words, and Things signified by them, the Power of Ordination belongs to the Name *Presbyter*, but not to the Name *Bishop*.

Thus, from all that hath been said under the foregoing Head, it follows, That a Succession of Bishops, superior to Presbyters, cannot be essential to the Being of a Christian Church, nor the Validity of Ordinances ; since it appears, that our Saviour did not constitute any superior Office to that of Presbyters for ordinary Use ; their's and the Bishop's Office being the same by his Appointment, or else the Presbyter is the more honourable Appellation.

SECT. III.

BUT having shewn that the Office of Bishop and Presbyter is the same in the holy Scriptures, and their Commission and Work the same ; I come (tho it is *ex abundanti*, and what doth no ways establish the Hypothesis I am now confuting, whether my Reasoning upon this Head shall be true or false) 2^{dly}, To treat of the Deacon's Office.

The Appointment of Deacons, as they are no ways necessary, so their Continuance seems purely a matter of Indifferency in the Christian Church. It arose upon the Occasion of the *Hellenist Jews*, complaining, that their Widows were neglected in the daily Administrations, as appears, *Acts* 6. 1, 6. and their Business, we are told, was, to serve Tables, ver. 2, 3. for over this they were appointed, when the Apostles thought it not proper to leave the Word of God to inspect them. 'Tis also observable, that they were all *Greek* Names, and therefore seem chose with a particular Regard, to take care of the Complainers. They seem also peculiarly useful in those Times, when a Community of Goods was much in use, and so many subsisted on the Charity of others. They were not appointed by Jesus Christ, nor do the Apostles mention them as essential to the Christian Church, nor direct the Continuance of them in it ; but only appoint them upon this Occa-

tion to take care of the Poor of the Church, and distribute the Stock: and their Office seems now swallowed up in that of the Churchwardens and Sidesmen. But it will be observed, that they are mentioned 1 Tim. 3. 12, 13.

To this I answer, that tho they are required to be Men of Sobriety and good Conduct, yet we have no Description of their Office and Work, nor any Intimation of their necessary Continuance in the Church; but that where the Churches have them, they must be Men of such a Character as is before describ'd.

But it will be farther observ'd, that they baptized and preached, and therefore might belong to some lower Order of the Ministry.

To this I answer, That they might do this by virtue of the Obligation which lay upon every qualified Person to do what he could for the Promotion of the Christian Religion; which I shall shew, both from Scripture and Antiquity, that they really were bound to. But if the *Deacons* did this by virtue of any particular Commission, (which yet doth not appear from Scripture, and therefore is impertinently alledged in this place) then it will follow, that they are not of any lower Order, but equal with the rest, because Preaching and Baptizing are all the Parts of the ministerial Office that are mentioned in the Apostle's Commission, *Matth. 28. 20.* and therefore the *Deacon's* Commission must be supposed to contain all the Parts of the ministerial Office, as well as the other. And certainly, it seems as reasonable to administer one Sacrament as the other. And therefore tho upon the Expediency of the Office at its Institution, the Christian Church retain'd it; yet it seems not from any Opinion of its being a necessary Office, any more than the *Deaconesses* which they seem to have had. That they had such Persons among them in the primitive Times, appears from *Rom. 16. 1.* where *Phebe* is commended to the Church, and described *διακονουσα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, which in all likelihood signified the same which in After Times was called a *Deaconess*. *Pliny* also mentions them in his Letter to *Trajan*, under the Character of *Ministres*; but these are now laid aside. And as they had *Deaconesses*, so they divided the *Deacon's* Office. They had

and their *Arch-Deacons* and *Sub-Deacons*, which plainly shews they looked upon the Office as a prudential Institution; useful, but not necessary; and which the Church might diversify and alter at pleasure.

S E C T. IV.

BUT, *2dly*, Having shewn that our Saviour hath invested all his Ministers with the same Commission, except where extraordinary Qualifications made any Distinction, and therefore that an higher Office than that of the Presbytery is not necessary to the Being of the Christian Church, nor the Validity and Acceptableness of the Ministrations thereof; I proceed to shew, that our Saviour hath not made the Ministration of any uninterrupted Succession of Men from the Apostles necessary to the Being of a true Church, and the Acceptableness of their Ministrations with him.

Under the *Jewish* Dispensation there was a positive Confinement of the Priesthood to a Set of Men, which before was more open: And every Man that brought an Offering might have been his own Priest, as *Cain* and *Abel* were, for any thing that appears to the contrary, *Gen.* 4. 3, 4. the Text making no mention of their bringing them to *Adam*, as the Priest of the Family; and as *Jacob* seems to have been, when he poured Oil upon the top of the Pillar at *Bethel*, which was done as a Thank-Offering. But the Priesthood being confined to the *Family of Aaron* and the *Tribe of Levi*, their Parts and Offices were distinctly appointed, and a solemn Guard set upon each Office, by a dreadful Threatning, That none but the proper Persons should intermeddle with it. Thus the *Levites* were taken to do the common Service of the Tabernacle, and had the Charge of the Vessels, Parcels, and Utensils of the Tabernacle, which none of the Congregation might touch upon pain of Death, *Numb.* 1. 50, 52, 53. And upon this account it is likely, that *Ozzab* died before the Ark, it not being his Business to touch it, *2 Sam.* 6. 7.

To the High-Priest belonged the Services of the Day of Atonement, and none but he must come into the

the Holy Place, and that but once a Year, upon pain of Death, Lev. 16. 2, 3, 4. To him and the inferior Priests belonged the burning of Incense, and the offering of Sacrifice, with other Services, from which the Levites were excluded on pain of Death, as appears by the Judgment upon Corah and his Company, who aspired after the Priesthood, Numb. 16. 10. And where there was such a positive Appointment as this, the Acceptableness of their Services was ordinarily confined to their observing of such a Rule, tho we often read of Cases of Necessity breaking in upon many of their Rules, and yet pardoned by God, who loveth Mercy and not Sacrifice; as our Saviour gives the Reason why God overlooked some Infractions of those Laws, Matth. 12. 7. Here was indeed a plain and positive Appointment of an Order of Men, their Work and Office specified, and each Man's Office guarded by a Penalty laid upon the presumptuous Intruder, tho Necessity sometimes excused it. But it is in vain to look into the *New Testament* for any such Confinement. Believers are laid to be made *Priests to God*, Rev. 1. 6. *an Holy, yea, a Royal Priesthood*, 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9. And we find no qualified Person forbidden the doing what he was capable of to promote the Interest of Christ; no telling the qualified Person, that he must not perform the Services of the Christian Ministry, when he had Invitation and Opportunity, upon pain of Death.

These Ministrations are required to be done in a Church assembled, but not confined to a Succession of Men in an uninterrupted Line from the Apostles. They that seek for such a Prohibition or Limitation, will lose their labour; and yet one might reasonably have expected it, if such a Succession had been as necessary under the Gospel, as it was under the Law. And our not finding such a Prohibition, is a certain Indication that such a Confinement and Limitation to such a Succession is not necessary.

But let us descend into a more particular Consideration of the Offices of the Christian Priesthood, (as we may call it) and see what goes to make a valid Ministration; and it will plainly appear, that no Act of a particular Order or Succession of Men is necessary to the Validity of those Offices. These are preaching of
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the Word; and Administration of the Sacraments. Now a valid Ministration is that which answers the Ends and Purposes intended, so as to secure the Effect thereby designed to be wrought. Thus, that is a valid Preaching which converts the Person to the Faith and Obedience of Christ; that a valid Baptism, by which a Person is entered into the Christian Covenant, and entitled to the Privileges thereof; that a valid Lord's Supper, in which the Death and Sufferings of Christ are sincerely commemorated.

1. That is valid Preaching, that brings Persons to the Faith of Christ, and instructs them in the knowledge of their Duty; and he that is capable of informing Men's Understandings, and brings them to embrace the Truth as it is in Jesus, performs a valid Ministration to them, whoever the Instructor is: and whether he be esteemed *an Apostle to others, yet doubtless he is one unto them, for the Seal of his Apostleship are they in the Lord,* 2 Cor. 9. 2. And as he performs a valid Service to them, so also acceptable to God, in regard both of himself and them. Whoever is the Instrument of the Work of Conversion, he performs an acceptable Service to God, as appears by this Consideration. That if the Promise of Christ to be with his Apostles, and succeed them in their Work, be an Argument that they are his Officers, then it will also follow, that whomsoever he assists, and succeeds in the Work of Conversion and Edification, it is an Argument that he has sent them, and that they perform an acceptable Service to him. And as this Service is acceptable upon the account of him who is the Instrument, so it is valid and acceptable to God on the account of the Person on whom this Work is wrought. For the Principle of Christian Faith wrought in a Person, and exerted by him, denominates him a Christian, and gives him, for the sake of Christ, a right to Pardon and Eternal Life, thro' the Promise of God declared in the New Covenant; and is therefore acceptable to God; not as the Ministration of this or that Order of Men, but as it is the fulfilling the Condition of the New Covenant, whoever hath been the Instrument of persuading this Change. But,

Let us consider what makes the Administration of Baptism valid. Now Baptism is a positive Institution of the New Testament, which by an outward and visible Sign, viz. the Application of Water, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a Person is entred into the Christian Covenant, and devoted to the Service of the Blessed Trinity; and by that visible Sign, assur'd of the Pardon of his Sins, and a Title to eternal Life: so that it is plainly obligatory on the Part of Men, and promissory on the Part of God. Now let us consider what makes this valid: and,

(1.) Let us consider what makes it a valid Obligation on the Part of Man; and that is plainly the Stipulation or Contract there made, or suppos'd to be made by the Person himself, if adult, or the Parents for their Infant-Child (who are in Scripture suppos'd to have a natural Right to bind them to the Service of God, as appears Deut. 29. 11. where all the Men of Israel, their little Ones and Wives, are said to stand to enter into Covenant with the Lord their God) that can lay them under an Obligation. And this the Scripture seems express in, viz. that the Efficacy of Baptism is not as the washing away the Filth of the Flesh, but as it is the Restipulation, and Promise of a good Conscience; or as it is the Address of a good Conscience towards God, of one that is sincerely resolv'd to do what God requires, 1 Pet. 3. 21. This makes it obligatory on the Part of Man, and therefore valid on that account: For should an Administrator forcibly baptize a Person pronouncing the Form, yet would not this contract an Obligation where there was not Consent, either personal or represented.

(2.) Let us consider the Ordinance, as it supposeth somewhat promissory on the Part of God, which the baptiz'd Christian hath a Right to plead; and certainly his Title to the Blessings promised, ariseth from the Christian Covenant, and the Charter of Privileges therein contained, which saith, *He that repenteth, and is baptized, shall have his Sins blotter'd out; and he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved:* and he that finds in himself these Qualifications, needs not question his Title.

3. And the same Reasoning will explain how the Lord's Supper becomes a valid Ordinance. The Design of it we know is to commemorate the Death of Christ, and the Benefit we enjoy by him, and thereupon profess our selves subject to him, and united to his Church. And in this Ordinance, as well as Baptism, is supposed also a Promise on the Part of God, conveying and assuring the Blessings of the Christian Covenant to the devout Communicant. Now by a Parity of Reason it appears, from what was said under the other Head, that the Essence of a valid Eucharist consists in the actual Intention, and sincere Purpose in my Mind to set apart the Elements, and improve them to that purpose. And if there was such a sincere Purpose of laying hold of the Christian Covenant, and an actual Intention of my Mind to apply the Elements to that purpose, the Gospel-Promise intitles me to the Blessings of the Christian Covenant. And nothing can be plainer than that these being positive Signs of Duty on our part, and Promises on God's part, derive their Efficacy not from any Virtue in them or in him that doth administer them, but only from their Appointment in the Gospel, and the Promise of God to them that by Faith receive them.

S E C T. V.

BUT further I proceed to shew, That such a Succession of Persons, ordained by the Imposition of the Hands of Bishops superiour to Presbyters, is not necessary to the Being of the Christian Church, because the Scriptures do not make the Imposition of any Hands, whether of Bishop or Presbyter, necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministerial Office, or the Validity of the Ministrations in the Christian Church. And this Proposition I shall endeavour to prove, by shewing these six Things:

1st, That there may be an Obligation to the Ministerial Work, where there cannot be Imposition of Hands from a Bishop or Presbyter.

2^{dly}, There is no Appointment of this Rite of imposing Hands, as the only way.

3dly. That an Apostolical Practice, tho it prove the Thing lawful and decent, yet is not necessary and essential to the Continuance of the Ministry.

4thly. That the Apostles did not lay Hands on all who ministered in the Gospel.

5thly. It is highly probable that they had other ways of appointing Persons to the Office, than by imposing Hands on them.

6thly. It supposes them in an Office already.

7thly. There may be an Obligation to the Ministerial Work, where there cannot be Imposition of Hands from Bishop or Presbyter. A Person may be cast into a Country remote from other Christians, where he may be under an Obligation to preach the Gospel, and administer the Sacraments, and yet cannot have Imposition of any Hands upon him. He may also be cast into such Circumstances where no one will give it him, and yet moral and perpetual Obligations may be on him to do what he can for the Propagation of Christianity. For as to *it is better than Sacrifice*, so moral Obligations must take place of Ceremonials, Matters of mere Order must give way to Things ordered. For the Duty to preach the Gospel (or God's way of saving Men by Jesus Christ) ariseth from the Command of Christ to do this Work, explaining and enforcing that great Command of the Law of Nature, which requires every Man to help his Fellow-Creatures forward in their way to Happiness. Now the great Enquiry is, when this Command of Christ obligeth a particular Person? And it must be considered, that no one can expect such extraordinary Calls or Qualifications as the Apostles had, nor can he find his own Name in the Bible appointing him to the Work: and therefore it must only be such a providential Call, as gives an Opportunity among a People to exert the Talents that God hath given him; and by giving these, hath laid on him a natural Obligation to use them in the best manner, to the Honour of the Giver, as his Providence doth direct. The Work he is to do in the name of a Minister, is describ'd in the Gospel, to be preaching, baptizing, and administering the Lord's Supper.

The Obligation to the Ministerial Work upon particular Persons, ariseth therefore from the Command of God expressed in Nature, and enforced by the Scripture, to every Man to whom he hath given Abilities to do what in him lies to promote the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This Will of his may be signified by the Call of his Providence casting in a Place where no better Help is, or by the Call of a Society, who, by pressing on him, give him a fair Intimation that he may have an Opportunity of being most useful. And yet all these Circumstances may concur, where he cannot have the Imposition of the Hands of either Bishop or Presbyter; and therefore Imposition of Hands, either of Bishop or Presbyter, is not necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministerial Office. But,

2dly, As there may be an Obligation to the Ministerial Work where there can be no Imposition of Hands, so neither is the Imposition of the Hands of a Bishop or Presbyter, appointed and commanded to be used as the only way of investing with the ministerial Office: Nay, I might observe, it is not so much as commanded to be used, as any way of investing with the Ministerial Office: for tho the Apostles did make use of this Rite as the Sign of Investiture, yet they did it not by any Command given them in the Bible, nor did they leave any Command of this Import behind them, to be used by those that came after them. There is not any Command therefore requiring the Use of this Rite, as the only or necessary Sign of Investiture; and this being a Search after a *Command* in our Bibles, there is no other way left but by appealing to the Eyesight of Men to determine it. And its having never yet been produced, is a strong Suspicion, that there is no such *direct* and *positive* Appointment. But let us go on with the Inquiry: That it is not in any Part of the Gospel before our Saviour's Resurrection, is plain to the Eye-sight of Men. He sent out twelve, and after that seventy Disciples, without the Use of this Sign, or any Intimation that they were always to use it in sending out other Labourers: And as there is nothing of it before the Resurrection, even when one would have thought it should have been spoke of, had it been a necessary, and the only Method of Investiture;

vestiture; so after his Resurrection, when all Power is put into his hands, and the Churches of Believers were to be gathered, it is then reasonable to suppose, that the fullest Instructions should be given about those things that were to be of necessary and perpetual Use. But we find nothing of the Appointment of this Rite, as the only or necessary Sign of ministerial Investiture; Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed, but nothing of Imposition of Hands as a necessary Sign of the ministerial Investiture; and yet one would have expected it, had it been of the same Necessity in its Place as they: therefore since this Rite is not appointed, one may fairly conclude it is not of the same Necessity with the other. And as we find nothing of it in the Gospel, so no Command appointing it to be the only Sign of Investiture in the *Acts* or *Epistles*: We find the Use of it the Matter of their Practice, but never the Matter of their Command; and whenever the Use of it is spoken of, it is not spoken of in such a manner as if it was a Thing newly appointed, but it takes notice of it as an ancient Rite of laudable Use in many Cases, wherein an Act of Supplication was performed to God, and the Person for whom the Blessing was asked was thereby specified, but not of any necessary Use. *Timothy* is indeed bid to *lay Hands suddenly on no Man*, 1 Tim. 5. 22. from whence some have argued a Command, appointing *Timothy* to lay on Hands as a constant and necessary Sign of ministerial Investiture; but this is a wrong Inference, because it is doubtful whether it speaks of Ordination or Absolution, in which Imposition of Hands was also used, and which the following words have led some to imagine might be meant in this place. But, however, it is plain, that the Emphasis of the Command lies upon the word *suddenly*, not upon the *laying on of Hands*, and means no more than that when he did lay on Hands, either in Ordination, Absolution, Confirmation, &c. he should not do it suddenly, hastily, or unadvisedly, but upon full Satisfaction of the Fitness of the Person for what he was then doing to him. Besides, it may be further observed, that this Rite of Imposition of Hands is so far from being appointed as the only necessary Method of Investiture of a Person with

with the ministerial Office, that indeed we have no Command, directing us what sort of Solemnities we shall use in that Investiture or Ordination (as it is usually called) which signifies the solemn Investiture of a Person in the ministerial Office, and thereby laying upon him an Obligation to the Work. Now in the Scriptures we are no where commanded what Solemnities must be used, much less are we told that any particular Form of Investiture is necessary to the conveying the Office, or the Being of the Church: Nature, and Reason do teach us, that there should be such a Method used, as may confer an Obligation upon the Person, and express the mutual Consent of the Person that is to labour, and of the Persons among whom he is to labour. But there is no Command appointing by what solemn Circumstances this must be conferred, much less that any one particular Form, or that the Imposition of the Hands of a Bishop, is the only necessary Form; and yet such a Direction one would have expected, had it been necessary. Concerning Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, the former as the Sign of Initiation, and the latter as the Sign of Continuance in the Christian Covenant, we have particular Commands and Appointments; but concerning the Form and Manner of Ordination, we have no Commands at all, no not in the Apostolical Commission it self, where one would have expected it. And tho from the Apostolick Practice it appears, that Fasting, Prayer, and Imposition of Hands is an antient and laudable Method, yet it no ways follows, that these are necessary Solemnities, or the only Form that is to be used, or that without this there is no Christian Church, true Ministry, or valid Ordinances; a Notion so horrid, and without any Foundation in Scripture, that there is reason to fear it rather proceeds from the Wickedness of Mens Hearts, than the Weakness of their Heads, and from a Design rather to aggrandize and magnify *themselves* than their Office: And it may justly be wondred at, that Imposition of Hands should be reserved to and esteemed to be so much the Honour of a Diocesan Episcopacy, which the Scriptures have commanded nothing at all of, and yet that Preaching and Baptizing should be turned over to the lowest

lowest Order, tho' plainly of Divine Appointment and indeed Preaching the greater, for the *Apostle* was sent not so much to baptize, as to preach the Gospel: thereby intimating this to be the more honourable Employment, 1 Cor. i. 14, 17.

But it will be objected against all this, That Apostolical Practice carries along with it the Force of a Command. Now the removal of this Difficulty brings me to the

Third thing proposed, which is to shew, That the mere Apostolical Practice may prove a Custom decent and lawful, (as I have never thought but that the present Method of Fasting, Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, is a laudable and decent Method) yet doth not mere Apostolical Practice make such a Custom the only necessary Method of conveying the ministerial Office, and contracting the Obligation, unless there was also somewhat in the reason of the Thing to make it so, or some Command attending it, importing such a necessary Obligation upon us to use it: but neither of these things can be pleaded for the Imposition of a Bishop's Hands, or a Presbyter's, as the only valid Form of Ordination. It cannot be pleaded that it is necessary in the nature of the Thing, or that there is no other way in which a Person's Fitness for the ministerial Office can be signified, or his Consent or Obligation to it expressed and fixed upon him, none of these can be said: and that there is no Command attending it, requiring the constant use thereof, hath been shewn before.

Since then there is neither any thing in the Reason of the thing, nor in any Command attending it, obliging to the use of this as the only Method of Ordination, mere Apostolical Practice cannot carry in it the Force of a Command, because it is very plain the Apostles did many things without intending to be our Patterns; such as their going out unprovided, without Scrip or Purse; *Paul's* preaching a free Gospel in many places: besides, they recommended and countenanced many things upon special Emergencies and Occasions, which no one pretends to be binding now; such as *Celibacy*, 1 Cor. 9. 5. and Community of Goods practised in the beginning of Christianity, besides many

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customs which were used in their Times, and may be
 said to have had their Recommendation and Conti-
 nuance, to be long since antiquated and disused, such as
 the *Agape* or *Love-Feast* at the time of the Lord's-Sup-
 per, the *Holy Kiss*, and *Anointing the Sick with Oil*.
 These have a more direct Recommendation than ever
 we find concerning the Imposition of a Bishop's Hands,
 or indeed any Hands in Ordination: And yet these are
 all of them long since disused; by which it is plainly
 confessed by all Christians, that mere Apostolical Prac-
 tice doth not create a perpetual and necessary Obliga-
 tion, unless some Command signifying such an Obliga-
 tion, or somewhat in the Reason of the Thing, had
 obliged us to it. But perhaps it may be enquired,
 whence the Apostles assumed the Use of this Rite, since
 we find nothing of it in our Lord's Instructions and
 Orders to them, as we do concerning Baptism and
 the Lord's Supper; nor are we told, that they receiv'd
 it from the Lord by any particular Inspiration. To
 this I answer, That it is highly probable they found it
 in use amongst the *Jews*, and took it thence: For be-
 ing willing to become *all things to all Men, that they*
might gain some, and spread the Gospel with greater
 Advantage among the *Jews*, with whom they usually
 employed their first Labours; in all places where they
 came, they were contented to take from them laudable
 and antient Customs, which they found among them,
 and turn them to the Service of Christianity, as our
 Saviour had done before, who is supposed by learned
 Men to have Christianiz'd (if I may so speak) their
 Baptisms, and the Bread and Wine which the Master
 of the Family sent about after the eating of the Paschal
 Lamb; which Custom our Saviour took up, and adding
 thereto the Remembrance of his own Death and Suf-
 ferings, appointed it an Ordinance of constant use in
 the Church. In like manner, the Apostles took up se-
 veral Synagogue-Customs, taking their Elders and
 Deacons from them, and the manner of their Ordina-
 tions: and amongst other things, this Custom of the
 Imposition of Hands, tho without any Design of mak-
 ing it of necessary use, or the sole Method of Ordina-
 tion, because there is no such Command attending it,
 as there is that of Baptism and the Lord's-Supper. But
 yet

yet this Imposition of Hands had much to commend it as an antient and laudable Rite, and once of Divine Appointment in a particular Case or two, when Persons were fixed in Offices, and by some distinguishing Sign recommended to the Grace of God. But it may not be an unprofitable Work a little to enquire into the Custom of imposing Hands in the various Cases in which it was used.

We find it used by *Jacob* in his blessing the Sons of *Joseph*, *Gen.* 48. 14, 15, 16. Here it is plainly a Form of Benediction and Impetration, not of investing with any Office. We find it also used as a Custom in sacrificing, where the Offerer laid his Hand sometimes on the Head of the Sacrifice, *Lev.* 3. 2, 8. *Lev.* 4. 15. and other places might be produced to the same effect; by which it appears to be used as a solemn Act of transferring the Right which the Person had in the thing offer'd to the Honour of God.

But the first time we find it used in the investing Persons with an Office, is in the case of the *Levites*, *Numb.* 8. 10. the Occasion of which was this. The Great God by the Destruction of the First-Born of *Egypt*, acquir'd a peculiar Right to the First-Born of *Israel*, to be his Servants, instead of whom he accepted the Tribe of *Levi*, who were to be assistant to the Priests, and attend the lower Service of the Tabernacle; and to make this Transaction the more solemn, the *Levites* are to be brought to the Door of the Tabernacle, and are there ordered to be purified; and the Children of *Israel* are commanded to lay their Hands upon the Head of the *Levites*. It is not to be doubted but this Text might have been quoted with as great Applause as another, by the Defenders of the Hypothesis we are now confuting, but only for the Circumstances, that the People are here required to lay on Hands in the Inauguration of the *Levites* into the Office; tho it is doubtful whether the Words *Beni Israel* mean the Congregation or the First-Born, in whose stead the *Levites* were chosen. It is observable, that it was not used in the Appointment of the Sanhedrim; but when *Joshua* is appointed to be the Successor of *Moses*, *Moses* is ordered to bring him before the Congregation, and lay his Hands on him, *Numb.* 2. 18, 23.

These

These are the most remarkable Occasions, at least, of this Custom being used: and we may observe, that it was used indifferently as a Distinction of the Persons prayed for; sometimes as a sign of transferring a Right, or of transferring Guilt from off the Person to the Sacrifice; sometimes Investiture into an Office was performed with it, and sometimes without it: When it was a sign of Investiture, it was performed by one of the Order himself, and sometimes by the People for whom they officiated.

But let us now consult the Practice of the *Jews* between the Times of the Old and New Testament, and we shall find them sometimes using it, and sometimes omitting it, to the Person whom they chose into the Sanhedrim and Synagogue.

* *Goodwin* tells us, in his *Moses and Aaron*, that they used Imposition of Hands, after the Example of *Moses* towards *Joshua*; at other times Inauguration was performed by a form of Speech to this effect: *Lo, thou art associated, and Power is given thee to judge of Penalties.*

But the learned † *Selden* describes this matter more fully, and tells us, it was the Custom of the *Jews*, in their Ordinations and Appointment of Persons into any of their Synedria or Councils, to perform it by Imposition of Hands. This Custom he observes arose from that of *Moses's* laying Hands on *Joshua* when he was to be his Successor, *Numb.* 27. 23. And this was the Custom when any Person was advanced to the Dignity of a Presbyter, that he was admitted to this Dignity either by three Persons selected for that purpose, of which one was of the Order before; and it was looked upon as rightly done when it was performed either by the Sanhedrim itself, or by one of them taking to himself two other Persons; and this Custom continued down to the time of *Hillel*, who was Prince of the great Sanhedrim above 100 Years before the Destruction of the Temple, as *Dr. Lightfoot* tells us in his Description of it. But after his Time, it grew into a Custom, that no Person should be esteemed rightly

ordained,

* Lib. 5. Cap. 25.

† Lib. 2. Cap. 7. de Syned.

ordained, but he that was ordain'd by the Authority of the Prince of the Sanhedrim, so as that he should not ordain without the Presence of the Father of the Consistory, nor the Father of the Consistory without him; nor any Collegue without the Licence of the Prince: and they always observed this Rule, to have three Persons present, one of whom should himself be of the Order of Presbyters. From such-like prudential Restraints as these in the Synagogue, arose, it's likely, those Canons in the Christian Church, which we meet with, by which Presbyters, tho of the same Order with Bishops by Christ's Commission, yet were restrained from the Exercise of Ordination, without the Licence of the Bishop or Prime Presbyter, as the Fathers sometimes call him, or else the Work was entirely restrained to him.

To the Custom of the Synagogue it's likely was owing the Canons of the Primitive Church, which require three Bishops to the Ordination of a Bishop; and a Bishop and two Presbyters to that of a Presbyter.

But the learned *Selden* observes, That tho this was the Method of Ordination when the Person was present, yet they did not look upon this as the only valid Method of conveying the Powers; for in regard of those that were absent, within the compass of the Holy Land, a Messenger from the Person creating to the Person created, was thought sufficient, if they sent in a Letter such a Form, *Behold thou art ordained, have thou the Power of judging*; or else, *I ordain thee*: And this was thought as valid as Imposition of Hands, from the most antient Times, and not an Innovation of *Rabbi Jehuda Ben Baba*, who flourished after the Destruction of the second Temple, as some have imagined, mistaking the Words of *Abraham Zaccuth* in *Inchasin*, Fol. 60. 1. 108. 1. who saith, That Ordination had been lost, and Judgment in criminal Cases, had not *Jehuda Ben Baba* restored it: For Ordination is performed not only by Imposition, as *Moses* did *Joshua*, but also by a Messenger and Codicil to the absent, as also to the present, by saying, *I ordain thee*, or, *Be thou ordained*; but, as *Selden* observes, some mistook the matter, as if

if the Rabbi *Jehuda* had been the Introducer of the new Custom of ordaining by Word of Mouth.

Cun. de Rep. Jud. * observes, that this verbal Ordination was used to the present as well as absent; and quotes a Passage from *Maimonides*, who saith it was read in the *Gemara Babylon*, that *Rab. Acha* the Son of *Rabba* said to *Rab. Asbi*, Is Ordination only performed by laying on of Hands? he said, It was done by Name, and calling the ordained Person *Rabbi*. More Observations may be seen in † *Selden*, who from all this observes, *Seck. 4.* that the Office of Presbyters, and the Manner of their Ordination, whether by Imposition of Hands or Forms of Speech, depended not upon any Divine Institution, but flowed from the Custom of their Ancestors, and Human Right: for tho *Moses* laid Hands on *Joshua* by the Divine Appointment, yet that laid no Obligation on them always to follow that Method; nor did it determine that to be the only way: and therefore if it had so fallen out in the Holy Land, that there had been no Person regularly ordained, nor any Consistory, it would have been lawful for the wise Men, or those that had the care of Affairs, to gather together and create others, and lay Hands on them, and determine the Manner and Circumstances of their Ordination. This was the Synagogue Custom; and for any thing that appears to the contrary, from them the Apostles borrowed it, and accordingly used it, tho without any Design of determining this to be the only Method, or necessary to the conveying the ministerial Office; because no such Command appears from them, nor any thing in the Reason of the thing, obliging us to it. So that we may from hence conclude, that mere Apostolical Practice doth not oblige us to it; and therefore it doth not appear that the Scriptures have made any Imposition of Hands necessary to the Conveyance of the ministerial Office, or the Validity of Ordinances in the Christian Church: which will appear farther, if we consider,

4thly, That they did not lay Hands on all that were concerned in the Ministration of the Gospel. To clear

* *Lib. 1. Cap. 12.*

† *Selden de Syned. Lib. 2. Cap. 7.*

this, let us compare *Acts* 8. 1, 14. with *Acts* 11. 19. and we shall find, that upon the Martyrdom of *Stephen*, the Church of *Jerusalem* were scattered, except the Apostles: and they that were scattered abroad, went up and down preaching the Word; and we are told of the Success of some of them at *Antioch*, *Cyprus*, and *Phœnicia*, and *Antioch* particularly. The Hand of the Lord was with them, and great numbers believed. Behold here the successful, and therefore valid Ministrations of a number of Lay-Christians, that travelled so far to preach the Word! for the Scripture mentions them under no other Character than Members of the Church of *Jerusalem*; and therefore to talk of them as Presbyters or Bishops, or the like, is only to invent what is wanting for the service of their Hypothesis. It's true, the Apostles, when they heard, sent *Barnabas* for their farther Assistance; but it does not appear to be for the supply of any Defect in the Foundation of the Church laid there: For when he came amongst them, and saw the Grace of God that was with them, he was glad, and exhorted them, that with Purpose of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Had a Person of the Spirit of *Hickes* or *Laurence* been sent among them, he must have told them upon his Hypothesis, that truly they had yet no valid Ministry, nor Sacraments, and were therefore destitute of the Privileges of the Christian Covenant, because their Preachers had not the Apostles Hands laid on them: But *Barnabas*, a good Man, full of the Holy Ghost and Faith (as he is said to be) rejoiceth.

Further, if we look into *Acts* 18. 26, 27. we find *Apollos* preaching, tho only instructed by *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, and helping them much, who thro Grace had believed. *Acts* 10. 23, 48. we have the Brethren of *Toppa* who went along with *Peter*, baptizing *Cornelius* and his Friends by *Peter's* Order, tho his Order neither made them Bishops, Priests, nor Deacons. Thus it doth not appear that the Apostles laid Hands on all that laboured in the Gospel of Christ. And if we look into the Practice of the Primitive Church, and their Sense of the matter, we shall find them far from thinking Apostolical or Episcopal Ordination necessary

to the Validity of a Person's Ministration. * *Tertul-*
lian hath several Passages of this Import. He observes,
 " The Peace of the Church confined the matter to Bi-
 " shops, then to Priests, then to Deacons : but had not
 " this Ecclesiastical Settlement prevailed, the People
 " might have done it, because that which was equally
 " received by all, might be given by all ; and yet he
 " would not have private Christians break in upon the
 " settled Order of the Church, because tho all things
 " were lawful, yet all things were not expedient ;
 " and would therefore have them be content with that
 " Right, when the Exigencies of Time and Place, or
 " Person, should require it." But I will mention ano-
 " ther Passage, p. 522, in his Exhortation to Chastity,
 where he was writing against second Marriages : after
 he had shewn that Priests ought not to marry a
 second time, he goes on to shew, that private Chris-
 tians ought not ; and the Reason he gives, is, " Be-
 " cause they are Priests : Also, for that the Dis-
 " tinction between the Clergy and Laity, was made
 " by the Church, and approved by the Bench of
 " Elders : so that where there is none of that Bench,
 " you both offer and baptize, and are your own
 " Priests." 'Tis plain from this Passage of *Tertul-*
lian, that the Right of Christians to perform the Services of
 the Ministry, is not mentioned as any private Opinion
 of his own, but as a Matter of Fact, agreed on by the
 Christians of those Times, and practised accordingly ;
 and therefore he urgeth it as a Principle from whence
 he drew other Consequences, and therefore doth not
 say, *You may baptize, and offer, &c.* but *You do bap-*
tize, &c. By all which it appears, that tho the Pri-
 mitive Church were for preserving the Order when
 settled, yet they did not look upon this uninterrupted
 Succession as necessary to the Validity of Ordinances ;
 nor Imposition of the Hands of an Apostle, Bishop or
 Presbyter, necessary to the Exercise of the ministerial
 Office.

But to confirm this matter further, let us consult
 the case of *Origen*, which we have an † account of,
 who passing from *Alexandria* to *Palestine*, at the desire

* Lib. de Bapt. p. 23. † Eusebius, Lib. 6. Cap. 19.

of the Bishops of that Country, expounded the Scriptures, and preached publicly, tho not in Orders. This gave offence to the Bishop of *Alexandria*; upon which Occasion, the Bishops of *Palestine* justify the matter by a Letter, wherein they tell him, "That he wandred
 " from the Truth, when he said, Laymen should not
 " preach in the Presence of the Bishop: for where any
 " are fit to profit the Brethren, the holy Bishops do
 " of their own accord ask them to preach unto the
 " People; and quote him many Instances to that pur-
 " pose, and tell him it is likely this is done in other
 " places." But I shall conclude this Head with another Author, and that is the Author upon the Commentary of *Paul's* Epistles, commonly ascribed to *Ambrose*, (with whose Works it is bound up in the 5th Tome) but supposed to belong to *Hilary*: and he * tells us as a Matter of Fact, That at first all Church-Offices lay open to all Persons, and any one did preach and baptize upon occasion; but afterwards when Congregations were settled, and Churches established, then none took upon him the Office but he who was ordained. By all which it appears plain, that the Primitive Church (tho they thought it most regular that the Ministry should be performed by those that were thereunto appointed, yet) did not think the Apostolical Ordination, and the maintaining a Succession from thence, were necessary to the Validity of Ministrations, or essential to the Christian Church, because they did not lay Hands on all that ministred in the Work of the Gospel. But,

5thly, I proceed to shew, that the Holy Scriptures do not make the Imposition of any Hands, whether of Bishop or Presbyter, necessary to the Conveyance of the ministerial Office, or the Validity of Ministration in the Christian Church; because it is highly probable that they mention other ways of conveying the ministerial Office than by Imposition of Hands, and that is by the Choice and Suffrage of the People among whom they laboured. I have already shewn, that the Synagogue had a different way of conveying it; that the Methods they used were of their own voluntary chu-

* Comment. Ephes. 4. 10, 11, 12. *Lip. de Bapt. p. 23. 24. 25.*

ing; and therefore it is not unlikely that the Primitive Church used other ways. I have observed, that one way in the Synagogue is by Letter or Word of Mouth; and it is no improbable Conjecture, that if *Timothy* and *Titus* had any peculiar Relation to *Ephesus* and *Crete*, which some of the Antients have told us that they had; it was not by virtue of any solemn Consecration to the Episcopal Office over the Churches there, (which we nowhere read of) but by virtue of the Apostle's Appointment by word of Mouth, or Letters according to the Synagogue Custom. For all that we read of is in his Epistle to those two Persons, *1 Tim.* 1. 3. we are told the Apostle besought him to abide at *Ephesus* when he went into *Macedonia*; and *Tit.* 1. 5. the Apostle had left him in *Crete*, to set in order the Things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City. This is all that we read concerning their being fixed with any relation to those Churches.

But that which deserves to be particularly considered upon this Occasion, is the Account we have in *Acts* 14. 23. where we are told that *Paul* and *Barnabas* went round the Country, confirming the Souls of the Disciples; and *καταστήσαντες ἐν αὐτοῖς πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐκκλησίαν*, which our Translation renders, ordaining them Elders in every Church: But as I shall endeavour to shew, ought rather to be rendered, appointing them Elders by the Suffrage of the People; they prayed with Fasting. This Verse is designed to express the whole Solemnity of their Ordination; but the principal Inquiry is, what the *καταστήσαντες* means in this place? There is indeed no doubt but the primary Sense of the Word signifies the appointing Things by Suffrage, or the Voice of a Society; of which Method the Learned give us this Account.

That when such Assemblies were gather'd for the doing of publick Business, the Matter was proposed by a Cryer, who said, To whomsoever this seems good, let him hold up his Hands; and from this Custom the appointing Magistrates, and enacting Laws by Suffrage, was called *Cheiratoria*; and therefore it is probable that *Paul* and *Barnabas* appointed them Elders by Suffrage. But against this it is objected, that tho' this was the natural Sense of the Word, it was also used

used for simple *Designation*. To this it is answered That we must not depart from the natural Sense of the Word, unless necessitated by somewhat in the Text or Context, that would render it absurd, nothing of which appears in this place: For it will neither contradict Scripture or good Sense, to take the word in the primary Sense, and therefore it is likely it should so be taken in this place. It is objected further, that in *Demosthenes* it signifies the same with *propose*, and *propose*, to decree and appoint; and therefore should not be taken in the primary Sense. But this Objection is very trivial, because in *Demosthenes's* Time and Country, Laws were enacted and altered by the Suffrage of the People; and therefore it was most natural to use the words in that Sense, when Things were settled by their Suffrage.

But it is further objected, That tho the primary Sense of the word signify appointing by Suffrage, yet in this place it is not applied to the People, but to *Paul* and *Barnabas*. But this Objection is yet more trifling, because in this Act of taking the Suffrage, there were Officers that did it, that were called *Prytani* and *Thesmothete*, who did only take the Suffrage of the People, and yet in common Speech the enacting Part was ascribed to them. Thus *Eschylus* says, *They call them Magistrates whom the Prytani chuse by Suffrage*; tho they only took the Peoples Vote. Thus *Jul. Pollex*, *The Thesmothete chuse Judges by Lot, and Arbiters out of every Tribe, and cheironomized Generals out of any Tribe*. The enacting Part is ascribed to them, tho they only took the Peoples Vote; and so it would be to *Paul* and *Barnabas*, tho they only took the Church's Suffrage. Other Quotations, to this effect, may be seen in *11 Lament* of Episcopacy. But after all, let the *Cheironomia* belong to whom it will, here is no mention of Imposition of Hands in this Action; and therefore whether those Elders were fixed by the Peoples Suffrage, or by the Apostles *Barnabas* and *Paul's* own Directions, yet it appears that they herein used another Method than Im-

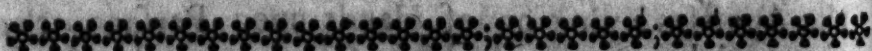
position of Hands ; so that this is not necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministerial Office.

6thly and Lastly, It appears that Imposition of Hands is not necessary to the Conveyance, because in the very manner of the Performance it seems not to be a Solemnity conferring an Office, which a Person had nothing of before ; but sometimes a Solemnity preparatory to an Office, and other times a Solemnity expressing their Instalment into an Office they had before some other way gained a Right to, and Possession of ; and therefore could not be the sole Method of conveying the Office, nor necessary to the Validity of the Ministrations thereof. This would appear by a narrow Enquiry into almost every Place where it is mentioned ; but that would be too tedious. Let us touch however upon some few Places where this will appear : The Case of the *Levites*, who were taken to minister in the lower Services of the Tabernacle, *Numb. 8. 10.* on whom the Children of *Israel* laid Hands. Now this Imposition of Hands cannot be called giving the Office, for that they had by Divine Appointment: The same may be said of *Joshua* being *Moses's* Successor ; this he had by Divine Designation, not by *Moses's* Imposition of Hands, *Numb. 27. 18, 22.* The same is plain of the *Deacons*, who were to take care of the Distribution of the Church-Stock for the Use of the Poor ; they had their Office from the Choice of the People, who chose them into it rather from the laying on of the Hands of the Apostles, that Custom being plainly consequent upon their Entrance into the Office.

In other Places in the New Testament, we may consider it as preparatory, and qualifying Persons for an Office, in those Places where mention is made of the Apostles laying on of Hands upon Persons, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and thereby be fitted to discharge an Office in the Christian Church.

In other Places we find it used in the Case of healing the Sick, as a solemn Form of recommending the Person to the Divine Grace, and of conveying a Divine Energy by the use of the Sign, *Luke 4. 40. Acts 19. 6.*

But the most remarkable Place that deserves to be strictly considered in this Affair, is *Acts 13. 3.* where we find the *Prophets and Teachers* laying Hands on *Paul and Barnabas*, whom the Holy Ghost called forth to an especial Service amongst the *Gentiles*. Now nothing can be more plain, than that the Apostles *Paul* and *Barnabas* could not be invested with the Ministerial or Apostolical Office by this Imposition of Hands for that they had not from Men, or by Men, but from the immediate Call of Christ, or the immediate Appointment of the Holy Ghost. But if we look into *Acts 14. 26.* it will explain to us what all these Solemnities of Fasting, Prayer, and Imposition were used for, viz. as a solemn Recommendation of them to the Grace of God, to assist them in the fulfilling the Work whereunto they had been called. This Action therefore, when applied by the Hands of the ordinary Pastors, cannot be supposed necessary to the Ministerial Office, or the only way of Conveyance, any more than the Prayers and Fasting of the People which accompanied; since we find the Rite of imposing Hands, used upon many other Occasions besides investing with an Office, and that the Persons on whom they were laid, were either in an extraordinary manner qualified for the receiving or exercising an Office, or else were supposed to be intitled to an Office already, for the due Performance of which they were by the Fasting and Prayer of the People, as well as by Imposition of the Hands of Ministers, recommended to the Grace of God. From all which it appears, that the Holy Scriptures have not made the Imposition of any Man's Hand necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministerial Office.



C H A P. V.

AND having thus endeavoured to shew the Weakness and Falshood of this Hypothesis, which asserts a Succession of Bishops superiour to Presbyters, ordained,

ordained, and ordaining by, and from the Apostles, as necessary to the Being of a Christian Church, and a true Ministry, &c.

I proceed to improve the Arguments I have made use of for the establishing a Corollary or two, that naturally result from what hath been said.

1. That the Law of Nature hath invested, and the Holy Scriptures have confirmed to every *Christian*, and to every *Cætus Fidelium*, or Society of Christians, all Rights, Powers and Privileges, all Obligations and Duties to do every thing necessary for the promoting true Religion, and of appointing Officers and Ministers to officiate among them for this end.

2. That therefore those Persons appointed by the Consent of the *Cætus Fidelium*, or Christian Society, to minister in Sacred Things, have all the Powers necessary to authorize them for the going on with their Work, supposing them qualified for it, and inclined to it. Both which Corollaries, because of the Affinity of the matter, may be confirmed together.

Now in order to clear this matter, let us enquire.

(1.) Into the Sense of the Law of Nature in this matter: and then,

(2.) Into the Sense of the Scripture.

S E C T. I.

I. LET us enquire into the Sense of the Law of Nature and Reason. And,

1. Reason will teach us, that it is the Duty of every Man to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of his own and his Fellow-Creatures Souls, as they are religious Creatures, and capable of subsisting in a blessed Immortality: For as Reason considers Mankind as Creatures that have Properties and Interests that belong to the present World, and terminate with it, so it also considers them as Creatures capable of Religion, and of subsisting in an eternal State: And as to promote the good of the former it directs to Civil Society; so to promote their good in a Religious Capacity, it directs to Religious Societies. Now the promoting

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God's Glory and Mens Good, is a Duty that necessarily ariseth from the Relations we stand in to God as our Creator, and to Men as our Fellow-Creatures.

2. Reason will also teach us, that these great Ends are promoted best by Religious Societies; by which our Relation to God, as his Servants, is publicly owned and professed, numbers thereby instructed at once; and their common Devotion offered up with Unanimity, becomes hereby more acceptable to God. These Societies contribute to strengthen one another's Hands in the same good Work, thro' the Association of Numbers together. As to the particular Exercises by which these Ends are promoted, Reason will tell us, they are such whereby God may be most glorified, and Man most edified; such as the Acts of Praise and Prayer, and the Profession of an humble Dependance on God for what is yet behind. By these God is glorified, that there should be Instructions to Man to direct him in his Duty, and to give him Rules for his sober Conduct in every Relation: and Reason will also teach us the use of every other Method, which God shall discover to us as proper to be used in his Worship.

3. Since all this is to be done, Reason will also teach us, that there should be particular Persons appointed and agreed upon, who should assist the Society in this Work, and attend to this very Thing: For as the Society consists of Men of various Capacities, Interests, and Relations; so every Person is not fit to attend this Work, nor can all Persons together perform the Publick Exercises of Religious Societies: therefore Reason will direct that some particular Persons should be set apart, whose Business it should be to attend to this very Thing; lest that which is every one's Business, should, if left in common, be done by no body. And therefore, as the Service of Religious Societies is best performed by the Appointment of such Officers; so it must needs be, that whatever is the Duty of the Society, must be the Matter of their Right and Power: for that Law (whether of Nature or Revelation) that requires any thing as a Duty, doth at the same time confer upon the Persons whom it commands, a Right and Power to do the Thing; or else it will follow, that a Person or Persons would be obliged

to that which is unlawful, or impossible; which is indeed contrary to Reason, Equity, and Common Sense.

4. Reason will therefore tell us, that as the Power of Societies is indeed the Power of the single Persons conjunct and united together by mutual Confederation and Consent; and whatever was the Privilege and Duty of particular Persons, becomes thereby the Privilege and Duty of the Society, so far as it can be executed by them: So it will also tell us, that as the Persons that officiate are chose by the Society, so all the Powers, Rights, and Privileges, which they enjoy therein, arise from the Consent and Allowance of the Society, (unless where the Author of Nature in an extraordinary manner interposes) and can have no other. For as they are not born superiour to the Society, nor doth their Relation arise from any foundation in Nature, but only in mutual Consent; therefore they can have no Powers nor Privileges therein, but what arise from that Consent, except (as I said before) where God interposes in an extraordinary manner; of which more hereafter. But,

5. Reason will also tell us, that as Persons only join in any Religious Society for their better Assistance in promoting the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Mankind; so this joining in Societies cannot be supposed to dissolve any of those Obligations which they are under as the Creatures and Subjects of God, to promote it themselves. And therefore they are still at liberty to leave any Society where these great Ends are not promoted, or are less promoted, and to join with others where they are promoted better; or do it themselves, where there are no others to do it.

But it will possibly here be asked, Who are to judge when those Ends are promoted or not? To this I answer: Those must be Judges of such things who must be approved for their good Conduct, or condemned for their bad Conduct; that is, every Man for himself; who as he must give an Account of himself to God, hath certainly the highest Reason and Encouragement to act cautiously in an Affair of so great Importance. And as Reason tells us this concerning particular Persons, so it tells us concerning Societies, that

that the chusing of Ministers to assist them in promoting the great Ends of Religion, doth not destroy or take away the original Right of these Societies, to take care that this be carried on by the choice of other Persons, supposing the Persons now appointed are averse to, or incapable of answering them; because all Power, and so all Agreement and Contracts, which are the foundation of that Power, are only given for Edification, and the promoting the Ends for which it was given, but is of no avail when it contradicts those Ends.

These are such things as seem plainly to me Dictates and Directions of the Law of Nature and Reason.

S E C T. II.

BUT in order to confirm the Corollaries laid down, let us enquire,

(2.) Into the Sense of the Holy Scriptures, which are God's positive Law for the Instruction of Mankind, and contain Explications, Improvements, and Confirmations of the Law of Nature. And here it ought to be observed, that whatever is a Dictate of the Law of Nature or Reason, is truly and properly a part of the Law of God, as much as any positive Appointment of Revelation; because it ariseth from the necessary Relations of one Creature to another, and the Subordination of the whole to God their Sovereign Lord, which is indeed the foundation of Obedience to all positive Laws: and therefore whatever was once a Duty or Privilege of the Law of Nature, remains such, unless taken away by the same Authority whose Will it once was. And this brings me to enquire into the Sense of the Scriptures. And,

1st. To see what Directions they give about Religious Societies.

2^{dly}. Whether they have taken away from Societies that Right of employing and empowering Ministers to officiate in Religious Affairs, which by Nature they seem to have had.

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1st. Let us enquire what they say about religious Societies: And here we may observe, that we meet with no particular Appointment of them in the *Old Testament*, but only that they were used; and most probably according to the concurrent Judgment of many Interpreters, that is the first Account of their use, *Gen. 4. 26.* That in the Days of *Enos* the Son of *Seth*, Men began to call on the Name of the Lord, and to associate together for Publick Worship. Intimations are also given, as if Persons attended the Teachings and Instructions of the *Prophets* upon some solemn Days, *2 Kings 4. 23.* where the Husband of the *Shunammite* objects against his Wife's going to the Prophet, (when he knew not the real cause) that it was neither New Moon nor Sabbath. From which we may gather, that it was the Custom of pious People to repair thither for the Benefit of the Prophet's Instructions upon these solemn Days. But it must be confessed, that the *Old Testament* affords but little Light in this matter. The religious Services spoken of refer principally to Families, which reach not our case: and as to what we have of Societies erected or organiz'd for moral Worship, it rather supposes they were set up, than gives any Commands that they should be set up. But let us look into the *New Testament*, where we have a larger Account to consider; and yet I think one may say there, that the Use of Societies for Worship is rather supposed as a thing already agreed on than commanded; however there is much more about it than in the *Old*. For,

1. We are told, that the Presence of God is now freely afforded in all places; and the true Worshippers who worship him in Spirit and Truth, may find him any where: *John 4. 21, 22, 23.* It tells us, his Presence is not confined to large and numerous Assemblies, but even *where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there he will be in the midst of them; Matth. 18. 20.*

2. We may observe, that the particular Exercises and Services to be done in those Societies, are not so much particularly commanded by distinct Laws, but rather described from Christian Practice; such as preaching or expounding the Scriptures, singing of Psalms, Prayer,

Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments. These are described as the Exercises of Religious Assemblies.

3. We are required to keep close to these Assemblies, and *not forsake the gathering ourselves together, Heb. 10. 25. but exhort one another daily.* These are our Obligations to attend.

4. Concerning the Persons who are to officiate, we have nothing said in the nature of a Command; fixing any certain and invariable Rule; nor are we told that the first Churches observed any: It was their ordinary custom to fix upon some particular Person or Persons, who attended to it. But it should seem that in some Churches, and particularly in that of *Corinth*, the qualified Persons jointly carried on the publick Work; and in other Churches, to whom Epistles are written, without notice being taken of any fixed Pastors among them. This shews, that the Scriptures have left the matter much as they found it, saving that it hath mentioned some positive Duties to be done in those Societies, which Reason could not invent. But,

2dly, Let us enquire whether the Scriptures have taken away from them (*viz.* Societies) this Right of appointing and empowering the Persons who officiate among them in religious Exercises, by any positive Command; which Right, it's plain, they have by the Concessions of the Law of Nature and Reason: And this I think they have not done. Now that I may confirm this Proposition asserted, and remove the Difficulties and Objections that lie in the way, I shall attempt the Proof of these two Propositions:

1. That the Holy Scriptures do commit to the *Body* of the *Faithful* (or to *Christians* in *Societies*) and command them the Care of all that for which the Ministry is appointed.

2. That those extraordinary Interpositions which we read of in Scripture, where the Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists, were especially appointed to be Church-Officers, and propagate the Christian Religion, or settle other Church-Officers by the Direction of the Holy Spirit; tho it might be said to suspend the Right of Societies while that extraordinary Interposition lasted,

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yet did not take it away; and therefore that the ordinary Regulations in Church-Affairs subsequent to the Apostles, could not take it away.

S E C T. III.

I. THE Holy Scriptures do commit to the Body of the Faithful (or to Christians in Society) and command the Care of those Religious Services, for which the ministerial Office is appointed. In order to clear this, let us take a view of the Particulars of it.

(1.) One part of the ministerial Work is plainly the Instruction of the Church in good Doctrine, and the Administration of the Sacraments, 1 Tim. 4. 13. Till the Apostle Paul came, Timothy is directed to give Attendance to Reading, Exhortation, and Doctrine: and Ver. 16. To take heed to himself, and his Doctrine; to be instant in Season and out of Season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-Suffering and Doctrine; 2 Tim. 4. 2. The like Instruction may be found to Titus, Tit. 2. 1, 18. and Tit. 3. 8, 9. and this also is made the common Duty of Christians in Society. The Apostle writing to the Saints and faithful Brethren in Colosse, Col. 3. 16. bids them let the Word of God dwell in them richly, teaching and admonishing one another, &c. The like is to be seen, 1 Thess. 5. 14. tho they are bid to know them which labour among them, and esteem them highly in love for their Works sake; yet are they also bid to warn the unruly, and comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak. Which plainly shews, that the care of these things was still the Duty of the Society; and the Validity of these Acts towards Men, and their Acceptableness before God, did not depend upon their being performed by Persons ordained by the Imposition of the Apostle's Hands, or deriving from thence in an uninterrupted Line: but whoever the good Work was performed by with success, it was accepted by him that commanded it. The like Commands to Christians in Society, are to be found, Heb. 3. 13. Heb. 10. 25. where they are bid not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but to exhort each other daily.

As to the Administration of the Sacraments, it is to be observed,

1. That in Scripture they are only commanded to be done, but there is no Command who shall be the only Persons to do them.

2. I have shewn under the 4th Particular of the 3d general Head, that the Apostles did not lay Hands on all that ministered in holy Things; and therefore, that if to the Society is committed the Business of Instruction, to them also is committed the Administration of the Sacrament: which is yet more plain if we consider what I have shewn above under the 4th Head, where I treat of the Commission, that since whoever is empowered to do one Part of the Commission, is empowered to do the rest, it will follow, that if the Care of Doctrine be committed to the Society, so is also the care of the Sacraments.

(2.) As the ministerial Office was erected to take care of the Administration of Discipline; so this also appears in Scripture to be originally lodged in the Society: as will appear if we consider *Math. 18: 17.* where an Offender that would not hearken to a private Admonition, nor hear the Admonition of two or three joined together, the Church was to be told of him, and to pass her Judgment upon him, whether the Person by his Obstinacy had not forfeited the Privileges of the Society. Now by the word *Church* in this place, I take to be meant the whole Society, and not the Governors as distinct from them, because in all other places of the New Testament I think the Word is so used to signify the whole Society, and not the Ministers as distinct from them. Further, the same Directions seem given to the Church of *Corinth*, (*i. e.* to the Society of Christians there) in the case of the incestuous Person: for he there directs, that when they should be gathered together in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and his Spirit with them, they shall deliver the incestuous Person to Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord, *1 Cor. 5: 2, 3, 4, 5.* 'Tis plain, the Persons to whom these Directions are given, are the Persons who are assembled together, that is, the Society of Christians there; and accordingly when the Sentence is remitted, which they are directed

directed about, 2 Cor. 2. 6. it is said, *Sufficient is the Punishment inflicted of the many*; which plainly shews, that Church-Censures were not then administred as the authoritative Act of the Ministry, but as the Judgment of the Society, and *Plebe Consentiente*, as well as *Plebe Prasente*; and nothing but the Largeness of Churches, Aspiring of Governors, and Laziness of the People, altered this Method. But here a formidable Objection is necessary to be removed. It will be said, That we seem here to confound the difference between the Governors, and Governed. But this is denied: for the true State of the Case seems to be this; That the Officers in Societies are appointed especially to attend those Services which the Society cannot always attend, or not all do together. So that the care of things common to all Societies, is especially committed to them, and in the Administration, the whole Society is represented. And therefore, tho their Authority ariseth from the Consent of the Society in general, yet the Powers of the Society being thus delegated to them, tho they may be said to be *Minor Universis*, (according to the antient Maxim) less than the whole Society, yet they are *Major Singulis*, greater than the single Persons.

But it will be farther objected, that hereby we set up every Man for a Preacher, and throw all into Confusion.

To this I answer, That tho we grant that every qualified Person hath an Obligation upon him to do what Good he can in his place, and so a remote Right to exercise his Abilities upon a proper Call; yet it no more follows that he must force himself upon a Society without their Call, than that every Man must set up for a Magistrate that is qualified, without being particularly chosen or commissioned thereunto.

And therefore as there is in every Body Politick, a Power and Right to do every thing necessary to promote the publick Good, and preserve itself from Ruin upon the Tyranny and Male-Administration of the Magistrates; so there is also in the Church (or *Cætus Fidelium*) a Power lodged to perform all Acts necessary for the Preservation or Propagation of Christianity. But then, on the one hand, as he would be a bad Sub-

ject who should revenge himself upon a Malefactor and usurp the Magistrate's Office, where the ordinary Administration of Justice could be had; so he would equally sin against the Will of God, who should break in upon Societies against their Mind, and the Order settled where the Ministers are performing their Functions according to the Gospel-Rule, and are ready to dispense the Ordinances to him, to the Satisfaction of his Conscience. And yet, let it be observed, that if a Person was injured or set upon in such Circumstances, as that he cannot have recourse to the ordinary Administration of Justice, it is undoubtedly lawful for the Person to do himself Justice: So if Christians were cast into any place where they could not have the Help of the ordinary Pastors, it would be lawful to set apart one of their own number to minister in Holy Things to them. And,

Lastly, As the Body Politick may upon the Male-Administration of the Magistrates, elect others, and lay the former aside; so may the *Cætus Fidelium*, upon the supposal of the Heresy or Male-Administration of the Pastors, lay them aside, and chuse others; and by comparing these Cases together, the terrible Consequences of the Objection may be removed.

S E C T. IV.

BUT I come now to the

(2d) Thing proposed; which is to shew, that those extraordinary Interpositions which we read of in Scripture, when Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists were especially appointed to be Church-Governors, without the Consent of the *Cætus Fidelium*, or Christian Society, to propagate Religion and the true Knowledge of God, and to settle other Church-Officers by the Direction of the Holy Ghost, tho it may be said to suspend the Right of Societies for that time, yet doth not take them away, much less could any subsequent Regulations.

The Proof of this Proposition will obviate a great number of Objections which arise from Christ's raising up Apostles, and other extraordinary Officers; and these

Apostles

apostles sending other extraordinary Officers, as Evangelists, or fixing Persons amongst Christian Societies by their own Appointment. From whence several Objections are raised to prove the Necessity of a Succession of Pastors, derived from the Apostles. But all these Objections will vanish at once, if we consider, that these were extraordinary Interpositions, that ceased long since, and consequently do not bind the Christian Church to any such successive Form. But this being a Proposition that will hardly be granted without Proof, I shall attempt the Proof of it.

That all Power is of God, is a Dictate both of Reason and Scripture, and holds true in whatever Relations it is exercised, and about whatsoever Objects it is conversant; and therefore, whatever Right, Power, or Title, any Man, or Society of Men have, or whatever Obligation they are under to do this or that, it is from the Donation and Will of God, some way expressed and signified to them. And as the Gift of this Right, and the laying on this Obligation is from him, so the suspending, limiting, or taking away of this Right, and the taking off this Obligation, depends upon the same Will made known and signified to Mankind: Therefore it follows, that notwithstanding all the Power he hath invested Societies with, Sacred or Civil, to alter for the Publick Good, either in Religious or Civil Affairs, (which we have endeavoured to prove under the former Head he hath) yet he hath reserved to himself the Right of interpoling in extraordinary Cases, either for reviving the decaying Knowledge of himself, or the farther Information of Mankind in what is their Duty, and in rectifying and preventing such Disorders as the World is prone to run into. And yet,

(1.) It is plain from the Facts themselves which are mentioned in Scripture, that these extraordinary Interpositions in Things Civil and Sacred, did not overthrow the Right of Societies, or oblige them to this successive Form, any more than extraordinary Interpositions in the case of Miracles, overthrows the ordinary Course of Nature.

(2.) Let us observe, concerning these extraordinary Interpositions, that tho during their continuance, they

may be said to suspend the Right of the Society, in those Things to which they are particularly applied; yet they may not so much as suspend, much less take away, the Rights of Mankind, in those things to which they are not applied; any more than the stopping the Sun in *Joshua's* Time, did stop the Progress of Nature in other Instances. Now let us examine the several Instances as they lie before us in our Bible, and see what can be collected from thence: and I begin with the *Old Testament*. Now let us observe, that in the History which that gives us of Mankind, we have but little Account of these Interpositions in Affairs either Civil or Sacred, in an extraordinary manner relating to Societies, until God raised up the Children of *Israel* to be unto himself a peculiar People. The Holy Scriptures give us an Account of Nations formed, of Sacrifices used, without telling us particularly the Grounds they went upon, or any Divine Command they had for doing so.

But that we may not be confused, let us particularly consider those extraordinary Interpositions both in Civil and Sacred Affairs; and it will appear, that tho' it might suspend this Right in Societies, of appointing and authorizing its own Officers, yet it did not take it away. But when the extraordinary Interpositions ceased, the former Right reverted to the Society, and things returned to the old Channel again; as will appear if we consider the case of the Sanhedrim. These were an extraordinary Council especially appointed of God for the Assistance of *Moses* in such Civil Affairs as came before him: These were chosen by *Moses*, who had then the visible supreme Direction of Affairs in *Israel*; they were set before the Door of the Tabernacle, *Numb.* 11. 16. God also promises to come down and take of the Spirit that was upon *Moses*, and give them of the same Spirit, and so fit them for Government. And yet tho' they were thus made Governors by special Appointment of God, and all this solemn Appearance in order to invest them; yet did it not take away the Right of the Society to chuse their own Officers when that Interposition ceased: nor did it oblige them to preserve always such a Form of Administration. For it doth not appear, that this Form was ever

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kept up in the Land of *Canaan*, the Scripture not making any mention of it after the Death of *Moses*, as *Dr. Crull* * observes: for when mention is made of the Division, it is spoken of as *Joshua's Act*, and no mention is made of the Sanhedrim.

The Children of *Joseph*, who think themselves aggrieved in the Portion allotted them, apply themselves to *Joshua* for Remedy, *Josh. 17. 14.* without any notice taken of the Sanhedrim. So the *Levites* apply themselves to *Joshua*, to *Eleazer*, and the Heads of the Fathers of the Tribes, *Josh. 21. 1.* Now these seem not the Sanhedrim, for the Sanhedrim were a select number chose out of these; and these seem rather the same sort of Persons who governed their respective Tribes, before the fixing of the Sanhedrim. There seems no reference to it in the Days of the Judges, who were Persons raised up of God in an extraordinary manner to govern them. For when there was no Judge nor King in *Israel*, every Man is represented as doing what was right in his own Eyes; which needed not have been assigned as a Reason, if there had been a Sanhedrim presiding in the supreme Direction of their Affairs. But that which seems the strongest Proof that there was no Sanhedrim presiding, is the Case of the *Levite*, whose Concubine was abused to death by the Men of *Gibeah*. There seems no Sanhedrim for him to appeal to; and therefore he divides her into twelve pieces, and sends them by the hands of Messengers throughout the Coasts of *Israel*. Upon the whole therefore, notwithstanding this extraordinary Divine Interposition in the case of the Sanhedrim, the Society was not obliged to preserve and keep up this Form of Government: But as soon as those Persons were dead, things returned to their former Method, and the Heads of their Tribes directed as formerly in ordinary Cases, and in the common Concerns of the Tribes, (when they had no Person especially raised up to be their Judge) and the High-Priest was present to ask Counsel in Cases of Difficulty. And we meet with no mention of it in the Days of their Kings; and in the Time of the Captivity it is not to be expected we should find

* Confirmation *Joseph. Lib. 1. Cap. 8.*

much mention of it. Whether it was restored by *Ezra* or *Nehemiah*, is uncertain: And tho the *Jews* talk of the Synagogue, yet that appears to consist of 108 Persons, and therefore distinct from the Sanhedrim of 70. And yet a Sanhedrim the *Jews* had before *Herod's* time; for 'tis said he slew them: and therefore *Dr. Crull* is of opinion, that it was restored in the Time of *Jonathan* the Brother of *Judas Maccabeus*, because in his Time the Letters sent to the *Lacedemonians* about an Alliance run in the name of the High-Priest, Senate, Priests and People.

But tho it was thus restored, it was plainly put upon another foot after the Captivity: for * *Goodwin*, in his *Moses and Aaron*, tells us, they were chose six out of a Tribe, save only four out of the Tribe of *Levi*. Others think they were chose by Lot. † *Lightfoot*, in the Description of the Temple, quotes *Maimonides*, as saying they might be chose indifferently out of any Tribe: they were inaugurated by Imposition of Hands, according to the Example of *Moses's* laying Hands on *Joshua*; tho they who were first advanced in the Time of *Moses*, had no Hands laid on them. Afterwards they were || inaugurated by a Form of Speech.

Thus tho it was the Divine Interposition that fixed the Sanhedrim without the Consent of the Society, (as indeed their Officers were generally so fixed during the Theocracy) yet that did not oblige them to observe this Form in a constant Succession, but left them to their liberty, in omitting it or keeping it up in what way they pleased. And accordingly, *Josephus* mentions five Sanhedrims appointed by *Gabinius* when *Judea* was divided into five Districts, viz. at *Amathus*, at *Jericho*, at *Saphora*, *Gadara*, and *Jerusalem*.

But let us pass on to another Instance wherein God interposed in an extraordinary manner, so as to suspend the Right of the Society in chusing for themselves, and yet did not take it away; and that is the case of chusing them a King. That God intended to allow them that Form of Government, seems most likely by consulting *Deut. 17. 14, 15.* where they are told, That

* Lib. 5. Cap. 4.

† Cap. 22.

|| *Goodwin*, Lib. 5. Cap. 5.

when they chose a King, he should be a Native, not a Foreigner. And therefore the fault found with them upon that Occasion, seems to be their tumultuous asking of him, and their ungrateful rejecting of *Samuel's* Government, whom God had raised up to be their Judge; and in him rejecting God's more immediate Government. However, God interposed, and fixed *Saul* over them; but he proving unworthy, was rejected; and *David*, a Man after God's own Heart, was settled upon the Throne; and after him, by *David's* special Direction, *Solomon*. This extraordinary Interposition might be said to suspend the Right of the Society, but did not take it away, as appears by the Conduct of the Tribes in the case of *Rehoboam*. The Son of *Rehoboam* claims not the Crown by any Divine Hereditary and Unalienable Right, (a thing much talked of, of late) because God had settled his Father and Grandfather there before him: for we are told, that when *Solomon* was dead, all Israel came to Shechem to make *Rehoboam* King; and there they propose a mutual Contract with him, offering to make him King, and serve him, if he would redress their Grievances, (for the latter end of *Solomon's* Reign had proved tyrannical, 1 Kings 12. 4.) But upon his refusal to redress them, ten of the Tribes reject him from being King, and chuse *Jeroboam*, Ver. 20. Now it doth not seem that they did ill in this matter, because *Abijah* the Prophet had told *Jeroboam* of it beforehand, as what God would do for him, 1 Kings 11. 31. and because God hindered *Rehoboam* from recovering them back by Force, 1 Kings 12. 24. where the Reason given is, because the Thing was of the Lord. Besides, *Israel* was never blamed for this Revolt; And tho God enabled *Abijah* to chastize *Jeroboam* after his fall into Idolatry, yet he never united the Kingdom, nor did the Kings of *Judah* ever treat the Kings of *Israel* but as rightful Kings of a free People.

Thus God's Interposals from time to time to settle the several Forms of Government among the *Jews*, as it did not affect the case of other Nations, (nor oblige them to set up the like Form of Government, nor allow them to expect that God would so interpose concerning them) but left them to their own Prudence

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in settling what Form they thought fit ; so it did not take away the Rights of the Society where it did interpose, but only suspend them for a time : for when the Interposition ceased, the Right reverted to the Society again, of fixing their own Officers.

S E C T. V.

BUT leaving the Business of Civil Affairs, let us consider God's Interposition in Sacred Affairs. And here we must observe, that our Notices from the *Old Testament* are very inconsiderable. We are left much in the dark concerning the Original of Sacrifices : we read of them as brought by *Cain* and *Abel*, and other holy Men down to *Abraham*, and so to *Moses* ; but whether it was the Result of their own voluntary Zeal and Devotion, or an Act of Obedience to any particular Command, we are no where told, for no such Command is mentioned. And yet on the other hand, one can scarce imagine, that such a Custom should universally prevail without a Divine Institution. *Abel* is said to offer by Faith a more acceptable Sacrifice than *Cain*, *Heb. 11. 4.* which one would think should have reference to a Divine Institution and Promise. Nor doth there seem any Suggestion in Nature, that the destroying a Beast should be a thing so acceptable to God, or the burning of the Body, which seems an Act of Waste, should be any ways so acceptable to God, as an Expiation and Atonement, unless he had told us so. 'Tis certain he commanded *Job's* Friends to take this Method, and go to *Job* to offer a Sacrifice of Expiation, and pray for them, and it should be forgiven them, *Job 42. 8.* This is indeed a Command in this case ; but the matter having been used before, doth not determine the first Original. But leaving this matter concerning the Original of Sacrifices, let us consider the Persons who acted as Priests in the offering them : And it must be observed concerning this, that we have no mention of the Priesthood, or Right of Sacrificing being by any Law confined to any particular Set of Men, exclusive of others ; nor does there appear from any Facts mentioned, any probable Ground to suppose it was so confined to any particular Set before the Law of

Moses. It is indeed most likely, that before the prohibition by *Moses*, every private Person, in any place, might offer his own Sacrifice, and perform the Priest's Office himself. It is certain there is no mention of *Cain* and *Abel* bringing theirs to *Adam* as the Priest to offer, (which some have imagined, in support of an Hypothesis.) *Isaac*, who must be considered as a private Person while his Father was alive, built an Altar, *Gen.* 26. 24. *Jacob*, who must also be considered as a private Person at *Bethel*, poured Oil upon his Pillar in the nature of a Drink-Offering, and was his own Priest: and the Prohibition of every private Person from killing a Sacrifice, *Lev.* 17. 3, 4, 5. supposes that Custom was used till then, that any Person might be his own Priest. It is not indeed unlikely that Family-Sacrifices were performed by the Master of the Family; that is, those Sacrifices wherein the whole Family was concerned, as in the case of *Job's* offering for his Sons, *Job* 1. 5. *Abraham*, *Gen.* 15. Further, it is not improbable, that there might be some publick Priests chosen either by an extraordinary Oracle, or by popular Election, or by right of some publick Office to which the Priesthood was annexed; which Priesthood they exercised in the name of the Publick over which they presided: and thus was perhaps the case of *Melchisedeck*, who is called the Priest of the most High God, to which Office he was perhaps advanced by some divine Appointment: and such a one was *Jethro*, who is indifferently called Priest, or Prince of *Midian*; the word *Cohen*, as the Learned observe, signifying either. And formerly the Kingly and Priestly Office were united in many Nations in one Person. Sometimes they were elected into this Priestly Office by common Consent, as we may probably gather from that Turn which *Josephus* gives to the Accusation of * *Corah* and his Accomplices, against *Moses*, That without the Consent and Suffrage of the People, and of his own arbitrary Will, he had advanced his Brother *Aaron* into the Priesthood; which renders

* *Antiq. Judaic. Lib. 4. Cap. 2.*

it no improbable Supposition, that antiently Persons were placed in the publick Priesthood by common Suffrage: and thus the Case stood before the confinement of the Priesthood to the Family of *Aaron* in *Israel*. It is indeed pretended, that the Right of the Priesthood belonged to the First-Born, and that *Esau* is called not so much foolish, as profane, for despising the Birthright; not only because Dominion, but the spiritual Privilege of the Priesthood was annexed, and the *Levites* are chosen instead of the First-Born, who are said to be the Lord's, *Numb.* 8. 17. as if they were so called, because they had the Right of Priesthood assigned to them.

But notwithstanding this hath been the general Tradition of the *Jews*, yet the Thing seems without foundation from Scripture: for the Profaneness of *Esau* referred to his despising the Privileges of the Birthright, and his Father's Blessing, whatever they were, in comparison of a Mess of Pottage, not the Priesthood, which is no where said to be annexed, and which he could not have while his Father was living. As to the First-Born being said to be the Lord's, it's not meant the Right of the Priesthood belonged to them; but they are called the Lord's, upon the account of his having purchased them to himself, when he slew the First-Born of *Egypt*, and spared the *Israelites*: Besides, the Scriptures are silent as to any such Right; nay, so far from mentioning it, that the Younger are in many remarkable Instances preferred before the Elder, as *Abel* before *Cain*, *Shem* before *Japheth*, *Abraham* before his elder Brother, (for if the Priesthood had followed the Primogeniture, *Abraham* had never had it) *Isaac* before *Ishmael*, *Jacob* before *Esau*, *Joseph* and *Judah* before *Reuben*, *Ephraim* before *Manasseh*. So that upon the whole, the Notion seems ungrounded, and that before the Settlement of it by Divine Appointment, every Person that brought an Offering for himself, might offer it: that in Offerings which concerned the Family, the Master of the Family by a natural Right offered them for his Family: that in the publick Priesthood of a Nation, he was either fixed by some extraordinary Oracle, or chose into it by common

non Suffrage, and had it annexed to the Supreme Magistracy, being called either Priest or Prince. But we are now to follow it into the Family of *Aaron*, where it was annexed to the Eldest Sons of the Family, who were High-Priests; and none but that Family must offer Sacrifice, under the highest Penalties. And tho this might be said to suspend the former Right of the Society in chusing for themselves Persons that should officiate in Sacred Things, and did limit them in such things as were a part of positive Religion; yet did it not at all limit them as to moral Worship, and the forming of themselves into Synagogues. These Synagogues are agreed on all hands to be Societies voluntarily confederate together for moral Worship; for we read of no express Command from God obliging them to it, or appointing the Form of Ministration, or describing and constituting the Officers who were to minister therein: but for ought appears from Scripture, they voluntarily threw themselves into the Form that pleased them; and constituted their own Officers by the consent of the several Societies where they ministred. And now the Societies of Christians having been formed after them, and having taken several things from them, as I have shewn already, it may be no unprofitable Enquiry to look a little further into them.

S E C T. V.

And here, (1.) It must be observed, that the Learned are not agreed upon the Time of their Institution, and first setting up among the *Jews*. Some imagine, that they were set up as soon as the Tribes were settled in the promised Land: for they suppose, that the Place of the Tabernacle being at too great a distance from the People of the Land, for them to repair to Sabbath-Worship there, this put them upon erecting Synagogues, where the Scriptures were read and expounded. And as a proof of this, it is observed, that upon some Invasion of the Land by the Enemies of *Israel*, mention is made of the Destruction of their

Places of Assembly. They tell us, it was a Custom among the good People, to repair to the places where the Prophets lived, on the New Moons and Sabbaths, to receive Instruction, as seems likely, *2 Kings* 4. 23. where the good Woman who was going to the Prophet about her dead Child, is asked by her Husband, Why she went to the Prophet, seeing it was neither New Moon nor Sabbath? which intimates, That it was customary then to go. But others observe, that tho this may prove some occasional Attendance about the Tabernacle, to learn of the Priests, or Attendance in those places where any of the Prophets for a time resided; yet it will not clearly prove that they had thrown themselves into any such Methods of constant Attendance for moral Worship, each Society under its own proper Officers; and that there is a general Silence in Scripture as to any Orders for the Institution of them: and therefore it is the common Opinion, that they had their Rise and Settlement after the Captivity. To prove this, the Learned observe, that it was a Rule among them, that in every place where there was a Synagogue, there must be a Copy of the Law. Now these seem very scarce before the Captivity; for *Jehosaphat*, when he sent Priests and Levites throughout all *Judah*, to instruct the People in the Knowledge of the Law of God, they took a Copy of the Law with them; which would have been needless, had there been Synagogues in the Towns, and Copies of the Law in them. And as this Passage proves the Scarcity of Copies of the Law, so consequently of Synagogues, *2 Chron.* 17. 9. But as their Ignorance in the Law was the occasion of their falling into Idolatry; so having smarted for that in *Babylon*, they were cured of their Inclinations to it: and to prevent their Relapse, the Knowledge of the Law was more cultivated than formerly, and Synagogues erected after their Return; in which Places they * attended thrice a Week, besides Festivals and Fast Days, and thrice a Day.

* *Vid. Prid.* 372.

(2.) We may observe, the Places where they were rected, were in all those places that had ten *Batelnim*, as they are called) or Persons of free Condition, that attended the Study of the Law.

(3.) The Services performed there, were Prayers in the name of the Congregation, Reading the Scriptures, that is, the Law, the Prophets, and the Shema. The *Shema* was three Portions of Scripture, *Deut. 6. 4-9. Deut. 11. 13, 21. Numb. 15. 37, ad fin.* And because the first of these Passages began with, *Hear, Oh Israel!* they call'd the whole the Reading of *Shema*. After this followed the Expounding of the Scriptures by the Interpreter, who turn'd them into the vulgar Language; this accompanied the Reading; and then the Preaching from them follow'd after.

(4.) The Government of them, and the Persons who officiated, were not necessarily any of the Priests, but any qualify'd Person of any Tribe whatsoever, who were for Order's sake admitted by Imposition of Hands, or by Form of Speech, as we have shewn above. It is not agreed concerning the Number or Circumstances of the Persons who officiated: the learned (a) *Light-foot* affirms, that the ten *Batelnim* mention'd before, were not so much consider'd as part of the Congregation, as that they were Officers in the Congregation; and accordingly describes the Offices thus. He tells us, there were three Persons to judge in Controversies that happen'd, and these were called *Confessus Triumviralis*, or the Triumvirate, and the Rulers of the Synagogue. Besides these, or it may be one of them, as Dr. *Prideaux* says, was the publick Minister of the Congregation; who pray'd, took care to call out Persons to read, expounded or preach'd. He was called, *Sheliach Zibbor*, the Angel of the Congregation; and by reason of his Oversight of the Readers, (saith *Light-foot*) the Bishop. And he observes the Controversy might easily be determin'd about Episcopacy, if Men would be contented to look into the Original of the Name and Office, and not dispute upon some Signifi-

(a) *Hora Heb. in Matth.*

rations of Words, fetcht from one knows not where; for by this he appears to be one of those who join'd in the Government of that Synagogue, and was as the Pastor of one Congregation, for every Congregation had its *Sheliach Ziboor*. These also were call'd *Barnasim*, or Deacons. The eighth Person of the Decemvirate, saith *Lightfoot*, was the Interpreter, who turn'd the *Hebrew* Sections into the vulgar Language. The ninth and tenth presided and officiated, he saith, in the Theological Schools. They that would see a fuller Account, may consult (a) *Lightfoot* and (b) *Prideaux*. This short Account of the Synagogue fully confirms (I think) what it was brought for; that notwithstanding God's extraordinary Interposition, in confining the Business of sacrificing (which before lay more at large) in one Family, yet that did no ways affect the Case of the *Jews* as to moral Worship: but that for the Discharge of this, they threw themselves into Societies, and fix'd upon a Form of Government for themselves, as they could agree, without any Divine Command obliging them to one uninterrupted Form; and that the Persons who presided in the several Societies, had their Authority and Relation purely from the Choice of the Society: for as they had no Superiority by Birth, so also it does not appear that God interpos'd to give them a Superiority, so they must needs have it from the Consent of the Society.

S E C T. VI.

BUT the Officers, the Orders, and the Methods of Proceeding being much transplanted into the Christian Church, let us follow it thither, and enquire whether the extraordinary Interposition of Christ Jesus, in raising up Apostles, in fixing Bishops, and Presbyters in particular Congregations, can be suppos'd thereby to have rendred a Succession of Bishops, deriving from them in an uninterrupted Line, necessary to the

(a) *Hora Heb. in Mat. New Test.* p. 377.

(b) *Connect. Hist. Old and*

Being of the Christian Church, or the Validity of Ministrations therein; or thereby deprive the Christian Societies of the Right they had by Nature of fixing their own Officers, and taking care of settling such as should ordinarily perform divine Offices amongst them: and I shall endeavour to shew it doth not. In order to the clearing of which, let it be consider'd,

(1.) That the Ignorance into which Mankind was sunk, gave occasion to these extraordinary Interpositions, and rendred them needful in the World. The Light of Nature was in a manner defaced among the Heathens; and the Jews had corrupted their Religion by Fables and Superstition; and by a scrupulous Observation of a Number of Ceremonies, had eaten out the Love of God and their Neighbour. In this dark Condition the World was, when it pleased God to interpose, and attempt another Method for the Recovery of Mankind into the way of Happiness; and that was, by sending his only-begotten Son Christ Jesus, amongst other great and glorious Purposes, to appear as his Messenger, to acquaint Mankind with the whole of their Duty, and recover their decay'd Sight, and give them such further Instructions concerning the Divine Nature and Will, as might best assist them in the way to Salvation. All this he fully did during his short stay upon Earth; and that there might be no manner of doubt of his being a Divine Person and Messenger, he confirm'd all his Revelation by undoubted Miracles, and went about doing good; for God was with him, preaching the glad Tidings of Salvation; and at last he dy'd an atoning Sacrifice for the Sins of the World. But,

(2.) We must observe, that the short Continuance of our Lord on Earth, and the settled Rules of his Ministry, did not permit him to go through the World himself, nor give that Spread to the Gospel, that was necessary for the Information of Mankind; besides the particular sending of twelve or seventy Persons in his own Life-time, he chose the abovesaid twelve Persons to be his Ambassadors, whom he design'd to be Witnesses of his Resurrection, which was to be the concluding Proof of his Mission. And after his

his Resurrection, when he was invested with all Power and Authority, he fully instructed them in the things pertaining to his Kingdom among Men, during his forty Days abode with them, between the Resurrection and the Ascension, and sent them forth into the World, as his special Messengers and Ambassadors, to beseech and instruct Mankind, that they would be reconcil'd unto God. And that their Capacities and Abilities might be equal to their Work, he *breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost*; and thereby gave them miraculous Powers, and an infallible Spirit. These twelve Apostles may be called Governors of the Universal Church, being so constituted by him, who was Lord of all; *and whatever they bound on Earth, was bound in Heaven, and what they loosed on Earth, was loosed in Heaven.* This extraordinary Interposition might indeed be said to suspend the Right of Societies for that time; and where the Apostles interpos'd, the Churches were oblig'd to own their Superiority, and submit to their Determination; and where they fix'd Pastors, or sent Ministers, the Churches were oblig'd to receive them, because herein they acted by a special Authority from Christ, and were guided by an infallible Spirit, so that it was as if he had done it himself. But this doth not affect the ordinary Succession of Pastors, when this Interposition ceas'd. For the Apostles can have no Successors in these Matters, except the Persons had been as specially nominated by Christ as they were, and as extraordinarily qualify'd. But this extraordinary Commission ceasing with the Persons to whom it was given, the Powers contain'd in it cease also. This will therefore help us to an Answer to this Objection, that the ordinary Ministry succeeds the Apostles in the Ministerial Office, tho' not in the Apostolical. For if by the Ministerial Office, we mean the Relation of a Pastor to his Flock, it is plain the ordinary Pastors cannot succeed them, because the Apostles were not Pastors of Churches, but Governors of the Church universal; and consequently the ordinary Ministry can no more succeed them, than a Constable of a Township succeeds a Justice of Peace, who hath Authority thro
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the County. But if by the Ministry be meant the Obligation to teach others the Knowledge of God; then I answer, That it cannot be said to succeed the Apostles, otherwise than as it was after them in Time: for the Apostles did not set up this Method of Instruction, as a thing new and unheard of till the Christian Church used it, but followed the Jewish Synagogue, amongst whom they found it. Besides, the Obligations of particular Persons now to the Ministry, ariseth not from any extraordinary Commission, or special Command given to the Apostles, but from the general Obligation which every Man is under both from Nature and Scripture, to do what he is capable of to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Souls; from the Call of Providence casting them amongst Persons who need their best Help, and from the Consent between them and the Christian Societies who commit themselves to their Care.

But it will perhaps be farther said, that it is likely that God should raise up an Order of Men, such as the Apostles or Evangelists were, and yet not continue Succession from them. I answer,

That it is no new thing with God to raise up extraordinary Persons to act both in civil and sacred Affairs, to preside in Nations, and revive an old Religion much decay'd, or raise a new one. Such, I have shew'd, were the Judges, some of the Kings, and the Prophets of the Jewish Church, whom God rais'd up for special Purposes of this nature, without any Design of leading the People to expect that he would in his Providence maintain an uninterrupted Succession of these, or that they who came after to do the work in an ordinary way, should pretend to derive their Authority from any special Commission given to the former. For when a Sovereign gives an extraordinary Commission to particular Persons, it ceaseth with the Persons to whom it was given, unless the Sovereign renew it, and put in other Names himself.

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SECT.

BUT it will be farther objected, that it is the Design of Christ to maintain an uninterrupted Succession of Pastors, one deriving from the other, because he promised his Apostles, when taking leave of them, that he would be with them *always, even to the end of the World, &c.* And is the Apostles did not themselves continue to the end of Time, therefore it must be a Promise to their Successors, and a Promise of God, to keep up such a Succession, &c.

But certainly here are several things begg'd, that seem destitute of Proof.

(1.) It is uncertain whether *always, &c.* signify the end of the World in general, or the end of that extraordinary Dispensation, which was then on foot in the World, and that extraordinary Interposition of Christ; for that there was such an extraordinary Interposition of Christ at that time, which did cease with the Apostles, is a Fact not to be contradicted; and that he hath never been with any, so as he was with them, is also plain and evident: and therefore the Promise must either be fulfill'd to the Apostles, or the Sense be ambiguous, because it is certain, that Christ was with the Apostles, so as he never was with any since that time. But,

(2.) We may observe, that there are other Instances wherein the Question is plainly begg'd, and that is thus: The Words *always, &c.* do not necessarily signify the end of the World, but the Period of any Dispensation, or thing then spoken. Thus it primarily signifies Eternity, as *Le Clerc*, on *Mat. 24.* observes, as deriving from *sempiternus*, and *sempiternus*, which signifies eternally. Afterwards it was us'd in a figurative Sense, to signify as long a Duration as could agree to the thing spoken of; where the time of Man's Life is express'd one time by *ever*, and in *Latin*, *seculum*: but as it signifies therefore in it self the Period of any Dispensation spoken of before, we cannot confine it to the particular Period of any thing, but only of the thing last spoken of; and this must limit it

the present Case. Now the Matter last spoken of, the extraordinary Presence of Christ, and the miraculous Assistance he afforded them for the spreading of Christianity; and this is most likely to be a Limitation and Explication of the Words now to be considered. And in this Sense it will signify a special Promise of Christ to the Apostles, that so long as he should think fit to interpose in so extraordinary and miraculous a manner as he was then about to do, he would make use of them. And that this is one Sense of the Words, is plain from Fact, that he did so assist them, and was present with them in such a manner as did in a short time cease. But now the other Hypothesis supposeth that the Phrase must signify the End of the World, because Christianity must so long continue. But this begs the Question, because Christianity may and doth subsist without the Continuance of that extraordinary Interposition, which our Saviour shew'd in the Case of the Apostles. But,

(3.) It is to be observ'd, that this Promise may not have any particular Reference to the Apostles Successors: for if you ask how they come in here, you are told, because the Phrase of the end of the World being taken to signify the final Period of things, it must take in the Successors, because the Apostles did not live to the end of all things. But this is another Instance wherein the thing in question is begg'd: and we may as well argue, that the End of the Age doth not signify the Consummation of all things, because the Apostles did not live to it, as say it takes in their Successors to the End of Time, because they did not live to it. Nay, we may better argue thus, because there was an extraordinary Presence of Christ with them, which there was not to any Successor of theirs, which hath had a ceasing before the End of Time in general, and consequently that Presence cannot be applied to any but those that had it; and in this they had no Successors.

(4.) Supposing it doth refer to Successors; yet it doth not follow, that it is necessary this Succession should derive in an uninterrupted Line from them: because nothing which belongs to the ordinary Ministry

try now, it contain'd in this Promise, more than what all Christians have: for the Emphasis lies in these Words; *Lo! I am with you.* But there is no more in this Promise than is contain'd in *Mat. 18. 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst.* And there's no more contain'd in that than in those Words, *Heb. 13. 5. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee:* both which are Promises of the perpetual Presence of Christ with all Christians; and therefore no peculiar Succession can be promis'd or commanded in those Words, *Mat. 28. 20.* And also, tho it be a Promise, that God will take care of a Succession of Ministers; yet it no ways determines, that the Imposition of the Hands of a Diocesan Bishop shall be the only way by which this Succession shall be maintain'd, which is the Point in question.

Upon the whole therefore, this Text in *Mat. 28. 20.* may be only a Promise of an extraordinary Presence with the Apostles, and so be confined to them, who had such a Presence as the ordinary Ministry hath not, and is not to be extended to any pretended Successors. Or if it have any Reference to any Successors, yet it contains a Promise of nothing more than what is common to all Christians: or else, if it be a Promise of the Continuance of a Succession, yet it doth not determine that the Imposition of the Hands of a Diocesan Bishop is the only way in which the Succession must be kept up; and so it proves nothing in this point before us. The like Answer may serve to that Text in *Ephes. 4. 12, &c.* where mention is made of *Christ's giving Gifts unto Men, such as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, and the Work of the Ministry, &c.* For,

(1.) The Emphasis lies upon the Word *gave*, for the Ends and Purposes mentioned. Now it is likely that this may refer to his extraordinary raising up of the Apostles, Prophets, &c. and so cannot be apply'd to the ordinary Ministry any more than the former. Or,

(2.) If those Words, in *ver. 13.* where those are said to be given, *till we all come unto a perfect Man, and unto*

the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ; should be allow'd to signify, Christ will have a Ministry till all the Children of God are brought to Perfection; yet it doth not determine the Case under Consideration, because it doth not prove that a Diocesan Episcopacy is the only Scheme that can perpetuate the Ministry.

(3.) Nor doth it prove that it is necessary to have a Ministry in any of the particular Forms and Orders here instanc'd in, because it will also prove it necessary that it should be had in all those Forms; since Christ is as much said to give all them, as any one of them, to be of perpetual Continuance.

But it is further objected, that the Apostles design'd to settle a certain Form and Order for Continuance; and made a Diocesan Episcopacy necessary for the Continuance of the Ministry in a successive Line, without the Interposition of the Christian Societies, where Pastors were fix'd, because *Timothy* was left at *Ephesus*, and *Titus* in *Crete*, to set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain Elders in every City: and these who were not inspir'd Persons, were Governors of Churches, without the Churches Choice. But neither will this reach the Case, if we consider the following Things:

1. That *Timothy* and *Titus*, and such like Persons, being appointed Governors by the Apostles, who were inspir'd Men, it was as if the Holy Ghost had appointed them, and therefore falls under the Head of extraordinary Interposition, which we have shewn doth not affect the ordinary Method of Proceeding. But,

2. Whatever was the Relation of *Timothy* and *Titus* to the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*, yet it doth not prove the Necessity of a Diocesan Episcopacy to be kept up, or of the Order of *Timothy* and *Titus*, be it what it will. For Bishops, they are no where call'd in Scripture; but, on the contrary, the Presbyters of *Ephesus* are expressly said to be Bishops of the Holy Ghost's making, *Acts* 20. 28. and this in the Presence of *Timothy*, as we have shewn above; and *Titus* is called

led expressly an Evangelist, which all agree was an unfixed Officer, and hath no Successor.

3. Tho *Timothy* and *Titus* were fixed Governours by the Apostles, by their own Authority, without the Consent of the Churches where they fix'd them; yet it doth not follow, that *Timothy* and *Titus*, or any of the like Order, were to have the sole Power of conferring the Ministerial or Pastoral Office, or that this destroy'd the Right of Societies to appoint their own Pastors and Ministers; but indeed, rather the contrary follows: for since they had a Plenitude of Power, only because they were appointed by inspired Men, it plainly follows, that they could not invest any pretended Successor with any such Power, because they were not inspired Men. Nay, if we consider it strictly, it doth not appear, that (tho the Apostles had fix'd them there by their own Authority) they could appoint Pastors in the several Societies of Christians, by any Power of their own, but by the Choise of the Society: and therefore the Relation and Authority of those Pastors to and over those Societies, arose not from any Authority given them by *Timothy* and *Titus*, but by the mutual Consent of the Pastors and Societies themselves.

But it will be observ'd, that *Timothy* is required to *commit something to faithful Men*, 2 Tim. 2. 2. But the thing is plain, that what *Timothy* is to commit to faithful Men, is not any Office, but a *Doctrine* he had heard of the Apostle; and he must commit it to *faithful Men*, that they may teach others.

But it will be further said, that *Titus* is wrote to, *to ordain Elders in every City*, Tit. 1. 5. But to this the Answer is plain, that it no more follows, that the Obligation to the Ministerial or Pastoral Office was created by an Act or Authority of *Titus*, because this Precept was directed to him; than it follows, that because the Writ is directed to the Sheriff, to elect a Burgess or Knight for Parliament, that therefore their Power of acting, and their Relation to the Society, ariseth from the Authority of the Sheriff, which we know it doth not, but the Choise of the People. And therefore, tho it should be granted, that *Titus* had

had a principal or sole Hand in the Solemnities of investing them with the Office; yet, as I have shewn above, these are neither necessary to the Being of the Office, nor do they confer the Obligation, or create the Relation: And therefore, as in the former Instance, it is not the Authority of the Sheriff that confers an Obligation to attend in Parliament, and creates a Relation between the Representative, and the Persons he represents; but only their mutual Contract and Engagement one with another: So neither was it any Ordination of *Titus*, or Imposition of his Hands, if that was always used, that created the Relation between the Pastors and their Flocks, and the Obligation to the Ministry thence resulting, but only the mutual Consent of the Pastor and his Flock.

The Sum of the Reasoning is this, that it is not at all necessary to the Conveyance of the ministerial Office, the Being of a Church, or the Validity of Ordinances, that there should be kept up in the Church a Diocesan Episcopacy, ordained by, and ordaining from the Apostles in an uninterrupted Line; because, as I have shewn, such a Succession cannot be proved: and it is not likely that God should make *that* essential to the Being of his Church, which he hath not by his Providence secured to us the Means of proving. Nor can such a Succession be necessary, because I have shewn, that it hath certainly never been kept up. Nay further, I have shewn, that if it should really appear, that a *Succession of Bishops superior to Presbyters*, have been kept up in the Christian Church, yet they are not necessary to the Being thereof, or the Validity of Ordinances; because,

First, I have shewn, that all the Ministers of Christ have the same Commission, Obligation, and Work assigned them, unless where extraordinary Qualifications or Appointments made any difference in the nature of their Work; and that therefore an Office of *Bishops superior to Presbyters*, is not necessary. And,

Secondly, That such a Succession of *Bishops superior to Presbyters*, cannot be necessary, because I have shewn, that Christ hath not made the Ministration of any

any uninterrupted Succession of Men, necessary to the Being of his Church, or the Validity of Ordinances.

Thirdly, Nor is such a Succession necessary, because the Scriptures do not mention the Imposition of Hands, as necessary to the Conveyance of the Ministry, or the Being of a Church; which I shew from these Considerations.

(1.) That there may be an Obligation to the Work, where a Bishop's Hands cannot be got.

(2.) There is no Appointment of this Rite as the only way.

(3.) That Apostolical Practice, tho it prove its Use lawful, yet not necessary to the obtaining the Office, or conferring the Obligation.

(4.) The Apostles did not lay Hands on all who ministered in the Gospel.

(5.) That it is highly probable they used other ways of Investiture.

(6.) That Imposition of Hands rather supposed Persons already under Obligation to the Office, than was any conferring of it.

And having thus shewn, that such a Succession of Bishops superior to Presbyters is not necessary to the Conveyance of the ministerial Office by their Imposition of Hands; but that on the other hand, I prove, that God hath both by Nature and Scripture obliged every Person to do what they are capable of for his Glory and the Good of Mankind in all their Interests. And that this may be the better done, he directs them to throw themselves into Societies and Assemblies; by which means greater numbers may be instructed, mutual Care taken one of another, Love promoted, and the Ordinances administered with greater Solemnity. To set this good Work forward, both Reason and Scripture direct, that Persons should be set apart, who should continually attend to this very Thing. And that this good Work of helping Men to Heaven might be set forward, when Men grew negligent, God was pleased to raise up Prophets, and extraordinary Preachers, who came by a particular Commission from him,

to

to awaken Men out of their Negligence, and revive the Knowledge of God, that was then declining: And after several Attempts, he sent his own Son; who after a short stay upon Earth, laid down his Life a Sacrifice for the Sins of the World: and yet to carry on this great Design, sent forth the twelve Apostles, and others qualified with an infallible Spirit, and miraculous Powers. But tho these Persons were invested with a Plenitude of Power immediately from Christ, yet did not this render an uninterrupted Succession of Persons deriving from them, necessary to the Being of the Church; nor can other Persons claim their Authority, except they had been thus nominated and qualified as they had been. And therefore since Christ doth not now interpose, as he then did, to nominate Pastors and Ministers, it follows, that therefore their Obligation to the Work in general, ariseth from his giving them the ordinary Qualifications and Ability to teach, and the Calls of Providence; and their own Inclinations further bind on them this general Obligation; and the Call of some Christian Society, and their Acceptance, limits this general Obligation to some fixed Place: and when all these concur, it is sufficient to create a Pastoral Relation, and confer the Obligation to the Work of the Ministry, even tho no other Solemnities should concur.

Thus have I finished this Essay, in a sincere Pursuit after Truth, wherein I am sensible there may be some Mistakes; but as there are none that I have voluntarily committed, so there are none but what I shall be glad to have shewn me: and especially I shall rejoice if this imperfect Essay be the occasion of stirring up some more finished Piece to appear in the World, for I am satisfied it would have its Use. For the laying the stress of Christianity, and the Gospel Ministry, upon the Continuance of Episcopacy, or indeed any uninterrupted Succession of Men of any particular Order whatever, tho it might seem designed to magnify the Set of Men that were boasted of, hath really been a Detriment to Religion and the Ministry itself, because it hath put it upon so precarious a Foundation,

dition, is incapable of Proof. To prevent which Inconvenience, I have pursued this Chain of Thought before you: and tho I may seem to have taken some things from it which others have ascribed to it, yet it can no ways be really detrimental; since he that makes full Proof of his Ministry, and is faithful in the Duties of his Office, will have Acceptance with God, and Esteem from Men, tho he doth not pretend to have derived it in an uninterrupted Line from the Apostles; whereas he that is an unfaithful Steward of the Mysteries of the Gospel, will be so far from drawing Credit from his Office, that the higher Hands he pretends to have receiv'd it from, the greater must be the Disgrace of his Negligence. And as those who find the Person that labours among them succeeded of God for the Good of their Souls, need not doubt but he is an Apostle to them; whether others esteem him so or not; so on the other hand, those who pretend to Holy Orders, and yet are unfaithful in their Work, and the Murderers of Souls, are no Shepherds, but Wolves in Sheeps Clothing, whose Hands soever were laid on them. And as he that successfully administers Physick, or gives good Advice to his Neighbours, deserves Thanks and Commendation from those to whom he is thus useful, tho he is no Doctor either in Law or Physick; so he that is thus happy in helping a Person forward in his way to Heaven, deserves Esteem from Men, and shall have it from God, though he pretends to claim from no uninterrupted Succession.

But further: As no one's Degrees in the several Faculties, can really render him more valuable or useful, if he is negligent in the Improvement of his Capacities; so neither will any Pretences to this Succession in the Ministry do it, where the Persons are insincere and unfaithful.

Yet as Reason will tell us, that since no one will neglect a regular Physician, who was diligent in his Business, (tho his Degree doth not contribute to his Success) and run to every Quack that sets up himself; so on the other hand, tho the bare Succession contri-

neither to the Success of the Ministry with Men
nor Acceptance with God; yet no wise Man would
set up himself, or run after other silly Pretenders,
where there is an ordinary settled Ministry diligently
attending their Office, and ready to administer Ord-
inances to him according to the Gospel-Rule.

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